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Rhythm

Every Drummer Needs It

Issue 293 | £5.99

SPECIAL ISSUE

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

FEATURING...

STEVE GADD

ASH SOAN

SHEILA E

MIKE PORTNOY

STEVE JORDAN

CHERISSE OSEI

DAVID GARIBALDI

JOHN FRED YOUNG

ANDY GANGADEEN

TODD SUCHERMAN

BRIAN BENNETT

AND MANY MORE...

How to:

Play hybrid

Find your musical identity

Nail an audition

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TAMA SUPERSTAR CLASSIC KIT

IMPRESSION X-HARD CYMBALS

LUDWIG 110TH ANNIVERSARY SNARE

YAMAHA LIVE CUSTOM HYBRID OAK KIT

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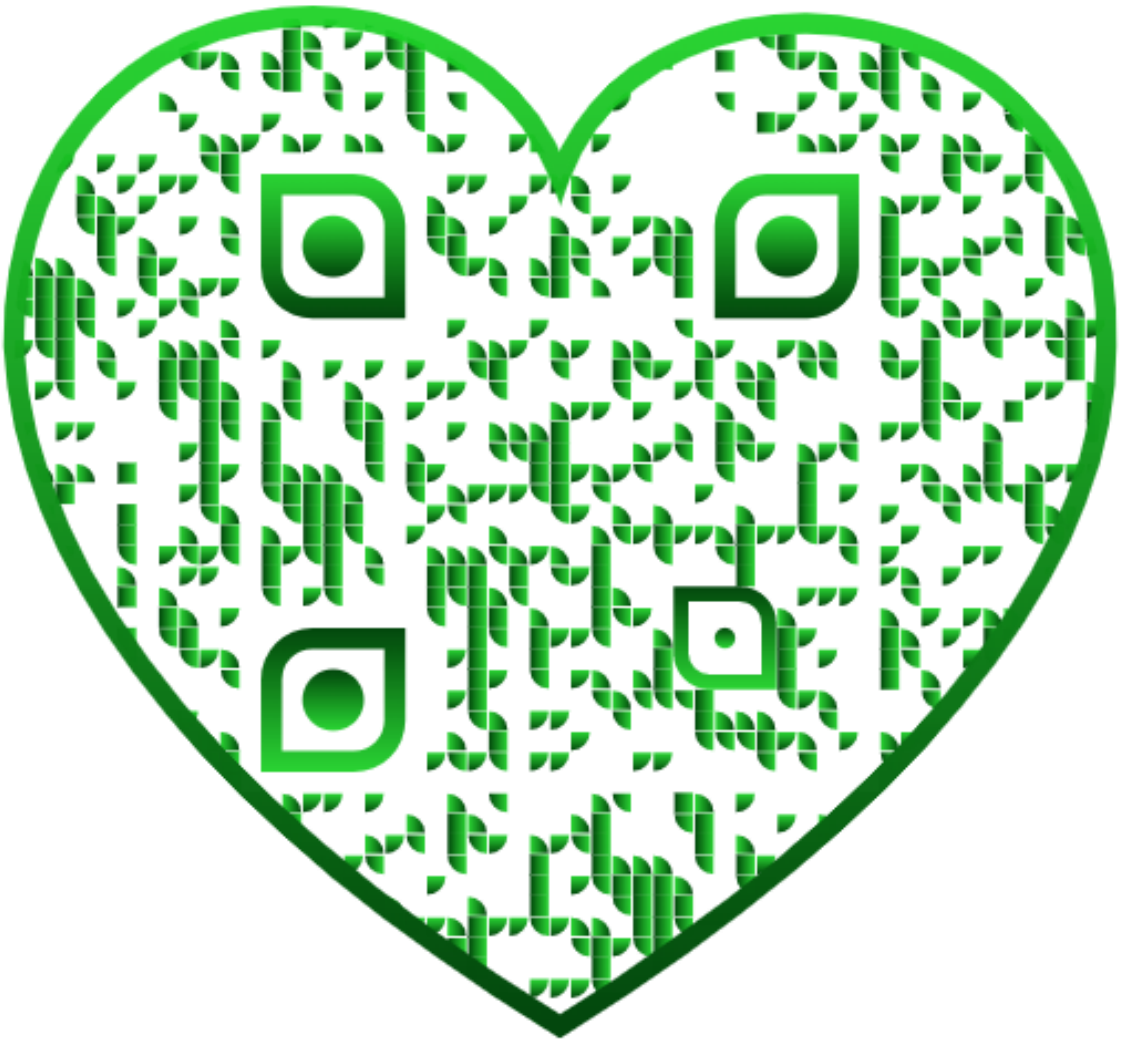

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HELLO, AND WELCOME BACK TO RHYTHM!

In the very first editorial leader I ever wrote for Rhythm – a few years ago now I have to confess! - I talked about how lucky I felt to find myself working on a magazine that sat at the very heart of the drum community, and what a very special place I thought that community was. It was always incredibly rewarding to be part of a magazine that was there to inspire, inform, educate and celebrate all things drum and percussion, and to pay tribute to the incredible players that have shaped our rhythmic history over the years. Every part of those sentiments still ring true today and, when Rhythm's 35-year tenure came to an abrupt end in February, it was very touching to see just how much the magazine had meant, to so many, over the years...

Well, the great news is Rhythm is back! Revamped, rejuvenated, redesigned – and ready to face the next chapter with a bang! In this very special issue to mark its return, we have invited a selection of today's most influential and aspirational drummers to talk in-depth about a game-changing track, and the effect it had on them. A track that above all others is their absolute favourite, one that proved to be that magic moment, that life-changing encounter with creativity... 24 drummers, 24 tracks – and a true celebration of the instrument, the players and the magic of being inspired to pick up a pair of sticks... Hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together and, judging by the incredible response we've had from pro players to be part of this very special feature, you can expect more in the future!

One of Rhythm's greatest strengths has always been its amazing team of writers, teachers and photographers, and I'm delighted to report that many of those famous faces are back to embark on this new adventure with us. Our tuition section, Beats Working – under the masterful watch of Pete Riley – now includes more targeted and varied content to help you become a better drummer and our gear editor, Tom Bradley, is on hand to ensure that all the latest gear is put through its paces under the watchful eye of the Rhythm reviews team. In addition to the regular mix of interviews, features, top tips, how-tos and techniques, do also watch out for the additional video lessons and content on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine) – that this month includes an exclusive kit tour with the one and only Mr Craig Blundell.

At the end of the day, Rhythm has been, and always will be, your magazine... Words I have used many times before on these very pages, but never have they meant more than they do now. As a specialist magazine, the reality is that it's not going to found in every newsagent so, if you do want to guarantee getting your hands on every issue, please consider subscribing. Going forward, this is going to be a joint effort and Rhythm will need your support. Not only will we strive to make Rhythm the very best it can be – and ensure it remains relevant as a source of insight and inspiration for drummers and percussionists around the world – we already have some other exciting plans in the pipeline, including a live event, Grand Slam, in 2020. Keep yourself up to date with all things Rhythm at our social channels and – good, bad or ugly – do let us know what you think.

So, once again, welcome back everyone and here's to the next 35 years of Rhythm...

Louise King

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'A LOT OF DRUMMERS **ARE GUILTY OF JUST PLAYING THE DRUMS**, RATHER THAN BEING A MUSICIAN.'
– DAN FLINT

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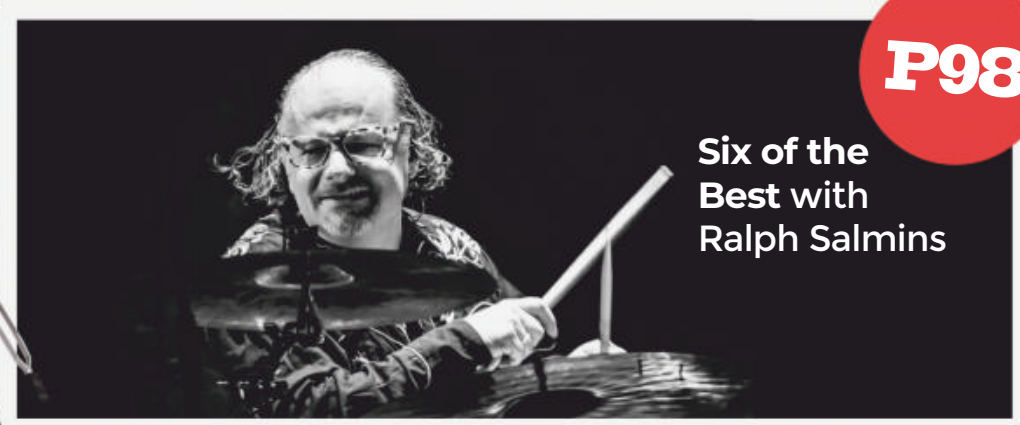

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Beat!

People | Music | Gear

Images: Andreas Neumann

Ride On
TAYLOR'S COATTAIL RIDERS RETURN!

For most of us mere mortals, the thought of a two-year world tour sounds pant-wettingly exciting and ridiculously exhausting in equal parts. Imagine trying to squeeze in recording a new album during the slithers of downtime amid such a globe-trotting jaunt.

Well, we suspected Taylor Hawkins was super human and he's gone and proven it by writing, recording and co-producing *Get The Money*, the third full-length outing from The Coattail Riders, during downtime from the Foo Fighters' *Concrete and Gold* mega tour.

"There was never really a conscious decision to start making *Get The Money*," Taylor admits. "[Co-producer and Coattail Rider] Lou (John Lousteau) and I would just hit it here and there when I had time off from the Foo Fighters, and I am super proud of the way it's turned out. The songs are really a tongue-in-cheek reflection of me now being a suburban dad and musically, of course, you can hear where my influences have come from!"

A sense of humour and fun is stamped all over the album, and it seems that the f word was a key driver in the 10-track collection.

"I originally started playing drums and making music because it was fun," Taylor explains. "It's still fun, and I had an absolute blast making this record. I love how my studio has developed over the years – the feel of it, the sound of it; it really is a great sounding drum room by the way!"

Of course, when you're Taylor Hawkins you have a *Who's Who* of rock royalty in your contacts list and he called upon some of his many talented pals for the record. Dave Grohl finds himself on four tracks, Roger Taylor makes an appearance (alongside Pat Smear, Gannin Arnold and Sex Pistol Steve Jones) on 'Shapes of Things' and then there's also the likes of Perry Farrell, Duff McKagan, Chrissie Hynde, LeAnn Rimes, and Nancy Wilson.

"Well, you just ask and sometimes you get lucky!" Taylor says of the star-studded liner notes. "Seriously though, it's amazing to be able to have these people on my record – no question about it – and I'm so happy to also have some incredible female voices this time."

Visit www.taylorhawkins.com for more details.

OFFBEATS

PALACE DRUM CAMP

The brains behind the popular Palace Drum Clinic events have assembled an all-star line-up for a Palace Drum Camp due to take place next year. Pete Cater, Rob Brian, Ian Palmer, Garry Allcock and Matt Green are all signed up as tutors for the three-day educational extravaganza. The camp is set to take place 21-23 February 2020 at Tudor Grange Academy in Redditch. For more information take a look at www.palacedrumclinic.com

Pete Cater's going to camp.

GORMAN MEMOIRS

Few rock bands of the last 30 years have been shrouded in quite as much mystique as The Black Crowes. Well, here's drummer Steve Gorman to shed some light as he shares stories and secrets from his decades with the Southern rock heroes in his new book *Hard To Handle: The Life and Death of the Black Crowes*. Watch out for an upcoming interview with Steve in Rhythm.

CLEGG'S SO HYBRID

Looking to 'go hybrid'? Then who better to guide you through the potential minefield of using Ableton Live alongside electronic drums than Joe Clegg? The Ellie Goulding drummer and MD has released 'You're So Hybrid', a video series dedicated to using this tech live on stage. The man himself explains: "I might be the only person that gets excited at the thought of pop shows being played fully live, by musicians using technology as an instrument, without conventional backing tracks, but it's more attainable than ever." Visit www.artclub.live/alfd for more.

HELLO WEMBLEY!

Introducing Rhythm's Grand Slam 2020

The relaunched magazine you hold in your hands is only the beginning. Rhythm is planning a huge live event for drummers in 2020 and you're all invited..

Rhythm's Grand Slam will debut on the weekend of 7th – 8th November 2020 at London's iconic Wembley Stadium. It promises to be a exciting celebration of drumming featuring some of the world's greatest drummers and percussionists.

As well as unforgettable live performances and the chance to meet your heroes, you'll be able to develop your skills with masterclasses and tutorials from seasoned pros. There will also be ample opportunity to see the hottest kit demoed and on sale at special show prices.

"Building on Rhythm's rich history of drum events has always been a key part of relaunching and bringing the Rhythm brand back to life," explained Editorial Director, Louise King.

"Not only will the Grand Slam feature stunning live performances from a fantastic line-up of the world's greatest drummers — plus seminars and masterclasses from Rhythm's expert team of educators — visitors will also have the opportunity to get their hands on all the hottest new gear from planet drum.

"Along with a series of additional innovative features, it promises to be an unmissable weekend for all drummers and percussionists and a true celebration of everything that the Rhythm brand stands for."

We'll bring you the latest news on this landmark event in future issues. Early bird tickets will be on sale soon. Visit **www.rhythmgrandslam.com** for updates and to sign up to our Grand Slam newsletter.

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SNAPSHOT

This Moment In History

Ginger Baker

19th August 1939 – 6th October 2019

"I went to a party in Blackheath where a band was playing, and all the kids said 'Go on, Ginger – play the drums!' They pushed me onto the drum kit, and it turned out I could just play! After the first chorus, I heard one of the horn players say, 'We've got a drummer!' It was the first time I'd ever played on a kit..."

Rhythm issue 111, May 2005

Image: David Phillips

Introducing

PARIS JEFFREE

When synth-poppers Years & Years needed live beats they gave her a call

When and how did drums first come into your life?

"I first sat behind a drum kit when I was eight. I played trumpet at that time but a few years later I realised I wasn't very good at trumpet and picked up painting sticks and started jamming with them. That started me nagging my parents to get me lessons. The fascination was there from early on."

When did you realise that drumming could be more than a hobby for you?

"It was a progression. I studied music in Sydney for three years and when I left there I got a residency in a nightclub playing drums, backing up DJs. I did that for about five years while I was still living with my parents. I used to put on headphones and just improvised; that gig was great for my internal metronome. It was certainly a long gig; five hours a night, 10pm to 3am every Friday and Saturday. It got rowdy at times. I had broken cymbals from people falling into the stage. Then I started playing with an original band and I'd only been playing with them for around a month when I got an email to audition for The Avalanches. That was about four years ago and I haven't stopped touring since."

So how did the Years & Years gig come about?

"I knew for the next stage of my career I'd have to move out of Australia. I'm glad it was to the UK. On my 30th birthday I got a call out of the blue to audition and I jumped straight in. I walked into these massive productions, it was terrifying. I strapped myself in and hoped for the best. It felt like it was where I belonged. This is what I've been working towards for years...and years."

What's on the way for you?

"We have some shows in Mexico and then the boys are breaking to write the next album so I'll be free for a while. I want to stay in the UK and get another live gig. I love London – there's so much happening here."

Key kit: *Gretsch Broadkaster drums, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Remo heads.*

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Welcome back Glen Sobel

Alice Cooper / Hollywood Vampires

Drumming in the dead of the night...

Was the new Hollywood Vampires album recorded late at night?

"There were definitely a few demo recording sessions at crazy hours. Tommy Henriksen was the producer, it was January of last year, he said, 'We're going to start working on some ideas, come over Wednesday night.' I said, 'I've got a gig.' He said, 'Doesn't matter, come after the gig.' I said, 'It's in Anaheim. If I come after the gig, I won't get there until 1.30 in the morning.' He said, 'Perfect! They're just getting going at that time,' talking about Johnny [Depp] and Joe [Perry]. Sure enough, I got down there at 1.30am, listened to an idea they had, started tracking some drums and was there until six in the morning."

What sound were you after for the Vampires?

"We were going for that AC/DC 'Back In Black' big and dry snare sound, where it's a pretty low tuning and a piece of paper over the drum with a square cut out in the middle where the stick actually makes contact with the drum. I was using a Big Fat Snare live on the tune 'Bushwackers' because it's like a rockabilly tune with a train beat. In the studio, we put a dish towel on the snare and it sounded like a killer vintage drum. You want to get the most out of your snares, these simple tricks work, dish towels, t-shirts, wallets, it's the weight."

Were you given much direction?

"They weren't necessarily giving me parts to play. That first night, it was the demo idea for a song called 'Git From Round Me'. Johnny said, 'Brother, play something impossible.' I said, 'No problem, it's 3am!' Johnny and Joe liked what was on that demo so much they got what's called 'demo-itus' where you don't want to change from the demo to the actual record, so I had to go back and write out every little fill I did. I'm listening back, 'Wow, I really played that at three in the morning? I don't even remember that!'"

Did you do many takes?

"A lot of the best takes have been a first take where you're warming up. Sometimes that ends up being the take with the right energy and the right vibe. 'Mr. Spider', which is a very slow Alice Cooper meets Pink Floyd song, that's a first take. 'Who's Laughing Now', most of that was the first take and Mike Plotnikoff, the engineer, said, 'Actually, that was good, man.' I said, 'What are you talking about? I was getting warmed up.' He said, 'No, no, come in and listen.' I did and we fixed a few things, but the energy was there. He said, 'You took us on a journey, man.' I'm like, 'I did?' They wanted that very imperfect feel. There's no Beat Detective or drum samples on this album. They wanted a very organic, raw sound, which is refreshing."

Out Now Hollywood Vampires – *Rise*

Image: Michael Miller

Introducing

MICHAEL RENNIE

Putting the rock in new alt-rock star YungBlud's America-breaking performances

Images: Thomas Pallant

When did you first pick up the sticks?

"My dad was a drummer but he stopped due to having a family and all of that. For his 40th birthday, my mum bought him a drum kit and I started playing. I was about 12 and I started taking lessons."

Did it come naturally to you?

"I think I had natural rhythm. Later on, I studied music performance but I always felt that I learnt more teaching myself than I did from teachers."

What kind of music did you gravitate towards when you were starting out?

"My playing style has always been rock! Even though I learned different styles when I was going through school and university, growing up listening to drummers like Taylor Hawkins, Dave Grohl and Chad Smith meant rock was always my background when it came to music. From as early as I can remember I always wanted to be able to play the way they did because it was so entertaining to watch and listen to."

We suppose the two years on the road that you've had with YungBlud has taught you plenty of lessons?

"No one teaches you how to be on the road in a van without any breaks. No one teaches you about travelling with the same people – that's the hardest part. But the US tour that we're on now has been amazing. The whole tour is pretty much sold out. It's been crazy every night – you can't ask for any more. We're all doing this for the first time as well, as a band. Drumming with YungBlud has got me back in playing rock 'n' roll the way I have always wanted to rather than pop music which is what I was playing before I joined. Being able to play like the drummers I grew up listening to when I go out on stage every night is the best! It's also developed my playing a lot with using hybrid drums to develop new sounds on the kit which is important as it keeps it relevant to the music on the records."

The band have great chemistry...

"Our personalities fit and that really helps with being on the road. We all lived together when I moved down to London so we have experienced being with each other all of the time like you are on tour. The tour has been great as well. Even our first US tour we had people outside the venues hours before doors opened. We have amazing fans and they are why we do this."

And you have plenty coming up... What's next?

"Our EP came out in October and then we have shows in the UK and Europe. Then we go to Australia in December, that'll be nice at the height of their summer! Into next year we'll be working on an album."

Key kit: *Natal drums, Zildjian cymbals, Remo heads, DW hardware, Vic Firth sticks.*

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KITS OUT!

Craig Blundell

1. THE SMALLER SECOND KIT

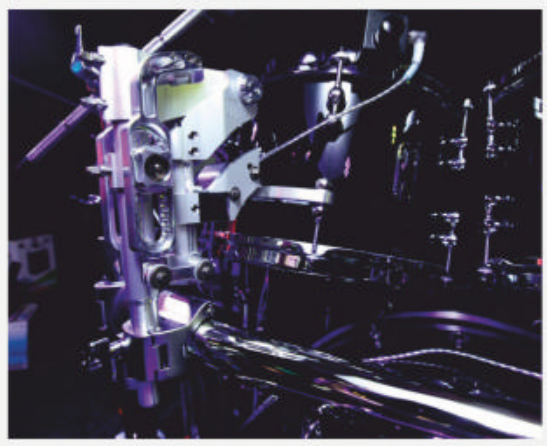
“This is the 16" Aux-triggered kick and two toms that made up the Steven Wilson tour kit that Mapex made for me. I spoke to Steven and a lot of things were going to be triggered, so I didn’t want massive drums for the whole of the gig and I didn’t want to trigger electronic sounds off a 22" kick drum – so I thought why not have a tiny little kick drum but one that has loads of punch.”

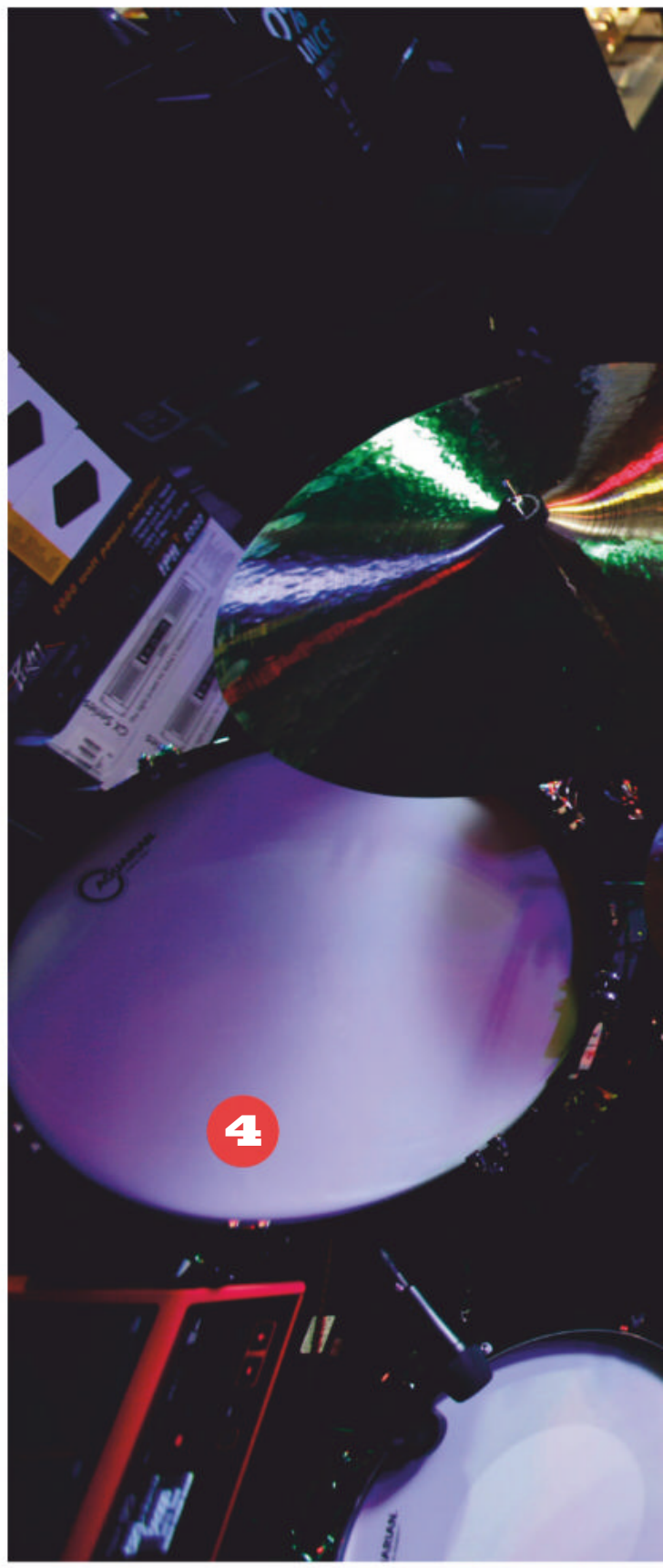
2. HYBRID

“I started playing hybrid in the late ’90s. Back then the pads were ridiculous, it was like hitting a Wickes’ worktop! It was awful. Fast forward and it was a few years before the technology caught up with the ideas. Hybrid has transformed my playing to an unbelievable extent and it has made me more hireable.”

3. SUSPENSION SYSTEM

“It takes time to set up the magnets for the MAATS (Magnetic Air Adjustment Tom Suspension) but what you have is a drum that you can completely control; the tone, how long it rings out for, it is staggering. It’s so good.”



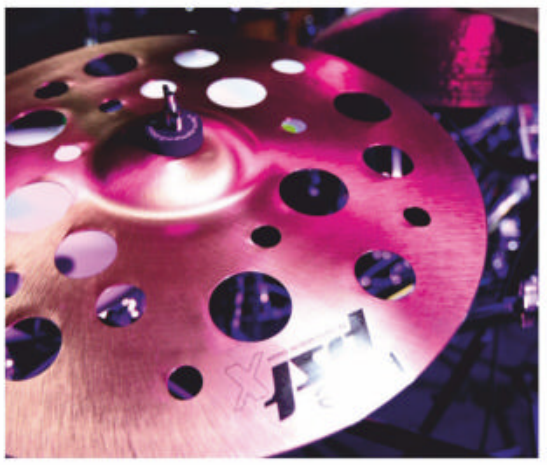


4. GONG DRUM

“I’ve always played progressive music and I’ve always had a gong drum. I just like the sound and that it doesn’t ring out. It has this lower tone than just a floor tom.”

5. CHERRY BOMB SNARE

"The Cherry Bomb is the perfect studio drum. It was the depth of tuning that did it for me. A lot of drums tend to have a nasty frequency range whether it be either cranked up or low pitch, but for me, the 14" Cherry Bomb range of tuning is so pure whether it's cranked or low. I love it."



6. CYMBALS

"A few years back my biggest crash was a 16", now, my crashes go from 20" up to 24". I had to swallow a little humble pie and think about my set up and how to get the sounds that the gig needed. My kit went from feeling compact and close to me to everything feeling like a reach."

Images: James Cumpsty

Watch Craig's kit tour now at
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Image: James Cumpsty

AUDITIONING

How to nail your next one by **Emily Dolan Davies**

So you've got the call, you've been sent the tracks, and it's official – you're going to audition!

If you're anything like me, the excitement of getting the call is quickly replaced with insecurity that starts to wash over you like a tsunami. What if I'm not good enough? That is the moment I go to my trusted routine to prepare for any audition.

The first and most important part of the audition (obviously), is to learn whatever song(s) I've been given, and I'm not talking about knowing them-ish, I'm talking about knowing them with a back-to-front, inside out, better-than- the-artist understanding of the music! Here's how I do it:

1. I listen passively to the music while doing other things such as exercise.
2. I actively listen while charting or creating a visual roadmap for each song.
3. I practise each song on the kit until I no longer need the chart, and there is no doubt in my mind about the parts, tempo and structure, and overall feel of the songs.

Seems simple right? Well, I can't tell you how many people I've seen audition who haven't done this and come in asking how the track goes... So. Awkward.

There is another side to the auditioning process that is seldom talked about; the mental side.

After learning the track(s), and

feeling I truly know them, I sit in a quiet room, headphones on, eyes closed, and visualize. I imagine walking into the audition, smile on my face, positive vibes, and with everyone in that room giving the same right back. I then (in my mind's eye) sit behind the kit and start listening to the songs. I visualize playing to the songs perfectly and imagine big smiles and the nodding heads of the artist, other musicians and management as I feel relaxed and in the groove.

This last step was an absolute game-changer for me and took me from being a nervous wreck and not knowing what had just happened at the end of an audition, to being in the moment, more confident, more myself, and even downright playful in the process! Much more fun!

I'm not saying that you will get the gig 100% of the time with this method as there are many other factors. However, if you can give everyone in that room the best version of yourself, it's a great start.

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Taylor Hawkins
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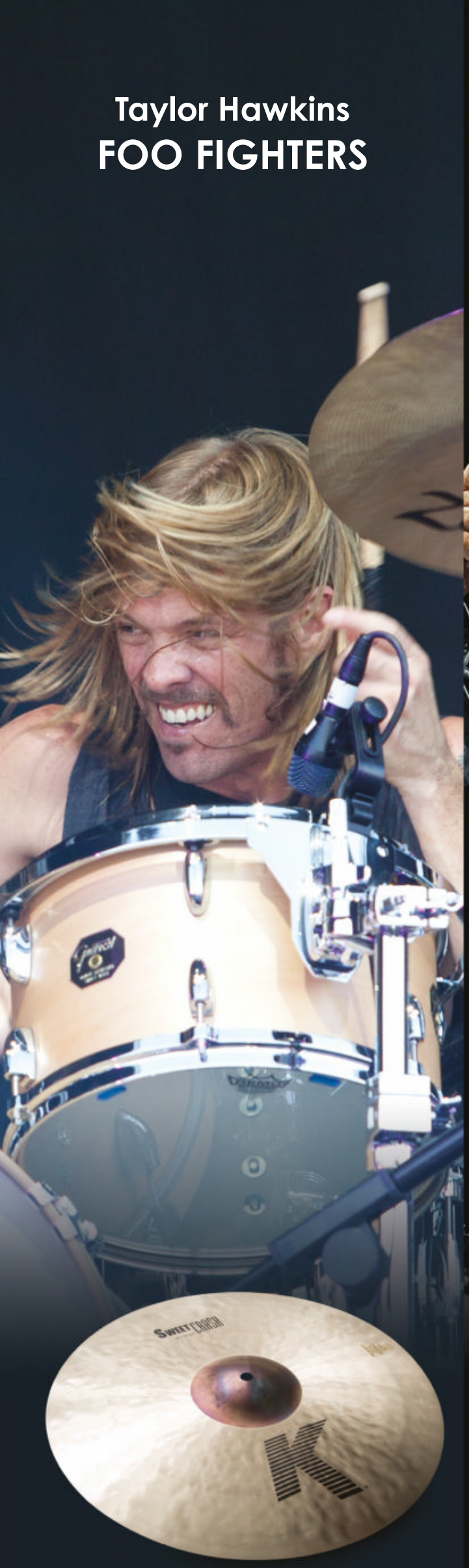


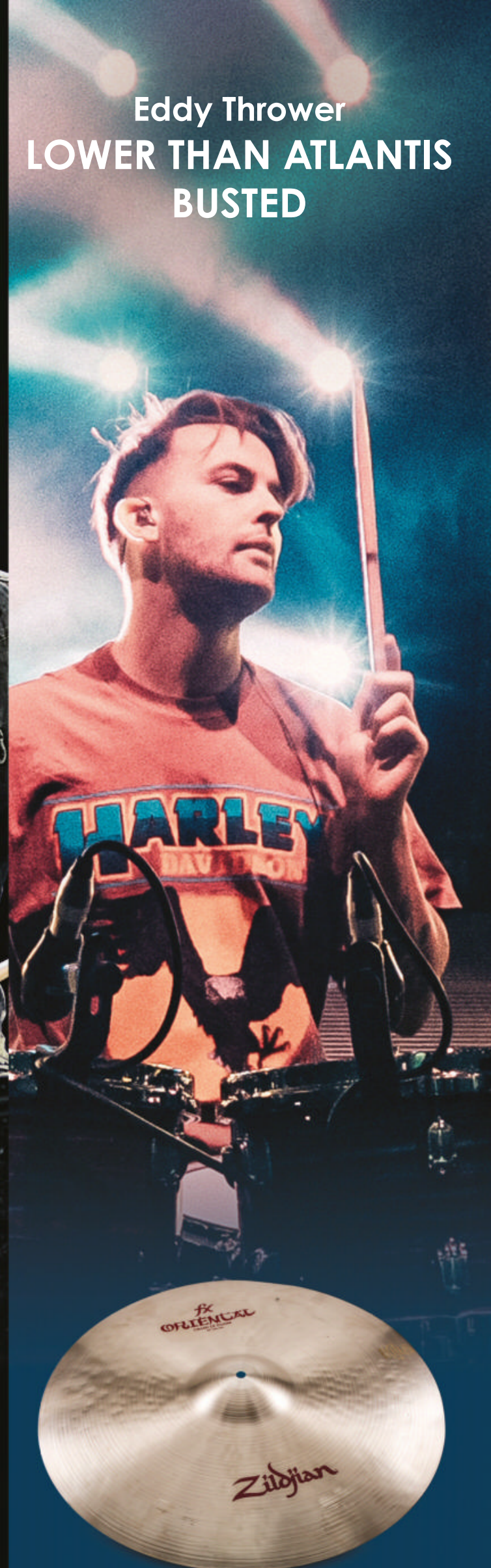
ARTIST CHOICE:
19” K Sweet Crash

Ash Soan
INDEPENDENT

Photo: Francesco Desmaele

ARTIST CHOICE:
14” A Series
New Beat HiHats

Eddy Thrower
LOWER THAN ATLANTIS
BUSTED



ARTIST CHOICE:
22” Oriental
Crash of Doom

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Jack Bevan
FOALS

ARTIST CHOICE:
24” K Light Ride

Josh Dun
TWENTY ONE PILOTS

Photo: Real Bear Media

ARTIST CHOICE:
19” A Custom
Medium Crash

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PLAYER
PLAYLIST
SETLIST: Main Kit List
ON
TEMPO 60 BPM 4/4

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FIRST LOOK

PEARL MIMIC PRO

Pearl is making its mark in the electronic drum market this year with the release of the e/MERGE kit and its stand-alone e-module, the Mimic Pro. This sleek-looking unit is touchscreen operated, features a 120GB internal solid-state drive and accepts files via SD card or USB.

The Mimic Pro has been developed in collaboration with Steven Slate Drums and comes with Slate's brand-new SSD5 software built-in. Those in-the-know will be aware that this represents an exciting partnership which will result in extremely high-level 24-bit drum samples. The 60 kit presets are made up of samples recorded in high-end studios by top engineers, using specialist recording equipment. Unsurprisingly, a number of these out-of-the-box presets showcase Pearl's acoustic drums such as its flagship Masters Series. The onboard software also allows for the sound of the original room mics to be dialled in and manipulated via the module. With the addition of compression, EQ and digital reverb, it sounds like there will be a high level of customisation available.

Aimed predominantly at professional level players, the unit allows for independently controlled monitor and front of house mixes. There is also a useful setlist function, click track and a stereo mix-in. The unit features 16 inputs and 16 direct outputs (6 via jack and 10 digitally) which will run kick, snare, hats, four toms, ride, crash and four assignable aux inputs. Triple and dual-zone cymbals are supported plus dual-zone hi-hat. As a result, the Mimic Pro is also touted as a direct module upgrade for those with existing and perhaps ageing e-kits.

Keep your eyes peeled for our definitive review coming in the next issue of Rhythm.

PRICE
Pearl Mimic Pro: £2250
www.pearleurope.com

FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1. Evans UV2 Heads

The new two-ply version of Evans' popular UV1 heads feature two plies of durable 7mm film which use the same patented UV-cured coating as their single-ply siblings. These snare and tom heads are available from 8"–18". *(From £21.90).*
www.evansdrumheads.com

2. Mapex 30th Anniversary Collection

In celebrating a very special milestone this year Mapex has released a limited edition kit and snare drum. The all-maple kit which is based on the Orion Classic is finished in Garnet Flame and made up of 22"x18" bass, plus 10"x7½", 12"x8", 14"x14" and 16"x16" toms. The 14"x6½" snare has eight plies of natural walnut. *(Snare £339; Kit £2399).*
www.mapex30th.com

3. Bill Sanders Button Pad

Practise your chops anywhere with this super portable 4" pad. Built to the same high standards as the rest of the Bill Sanders range, this tiny practice aid features an internal weight for stability. Its minute size allows it to fit easily into a stick bag or even a pocket. *(£26.99).*
www.practicedrumkits.co.uk

4. No Nuts Cymbal Sleeves

Eliminating not only the need for wing-nuts but essentially all the other related paraphernalia. The squeeze-fit sleeves will fit onto any 6mm or 8mm threads and are designed to stay in place for a quicker setup and pack-down. *(£13.50 – 3 pack).*
www.nonutscymbalsleeves.com

5. ACD Darwin FTW Pedals

The FTW range is the second generation of ACD's fastidiously built Darwin hardware. With a host of new features across single, double, middle, hi-hat and remote hi-hat options, the most noteworthy feature is the ability to fold the pedals away almost completely flat for easy transportation. *(From £475).*
www.acd-unlimited.at

6. Sabian HHX Complex

This new Sabian line uses a blend of HH and HHX hammering techniques which combined with an un-lathed bell, creates a softer and darker tone. The HHX Complex range includes 14" and 15" hi-hats, 20" and 22" rides and 16" to 22" crashes. *(Price TBC).*
www.sabian.com

7. Pearl e/MERGE

Developed in collaboration with Korg, the e/MERGE sets out to create a new standard in electronic drums. Its Wave Trigger Technology is designed to create a more realistic, instantaneous and dynamic response. Combined with realistic-feeling pads and a powerful module, this sure looks like an enticing bit of kit. *(£3699).*
www.pearleurope.com

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LUDWIG CLUB DATE KIT

Vintage CIRCA 1966

This Ludwig semi-pro kit has an identical finish to the one made famous by Ringo Starr in his Beatles heyday

Today we are used to the major drum companies marketing several lines of drums, from starter through semi-pro to professional, each with different shell makeups, finishes and hardware. Yet back in the 1960s, before the Japanese re-imagined the drum business, things were simpler. It was normal for manufacturers to make just one type of shell and employ it for all their drum lines, from workaday kits to their top of the range series. Budget lines skimped on hardware components rather than on their shells.

Thus this Ludwig clubbing (or student) kit has exactly the same shells and wrap as the famous signature kits played by Ringo Starr in The Beatles. The finish was called Oyster Black Pearl and makes this 1966 Club Date set most desirable.

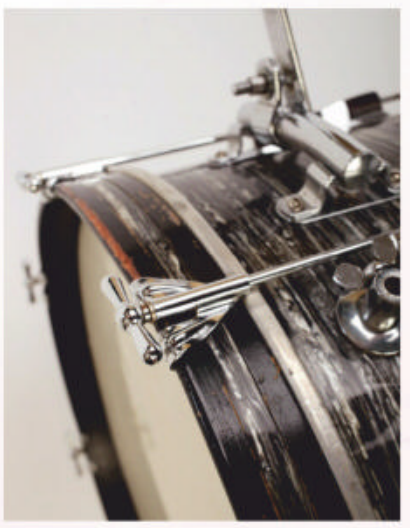
Owner Simon Wagstaff says, "The shells are effectively the same as those of a Downbeat kit, the first Beatles Ludwig that Ringo played. The single tension lugs are the only major difference." Simon's drums are 20"x14", 12"x8" and 14"x14" – the Downbeat configuration, but as Simon puts it, "A cheaper option for collectors!"

Whereas Ludwig's top range Downbeat and Super Classic kits had single-ended Classic lugs, the Club Date has double-ended Classic lugs. Positioned centrally, they necessitate extra-long tension rods. These rods have the old-fashioned bow tie style 'T' handles on the bass drum – another concession to keeping costs down for the budget nature of the kit. As indeed are the simple bass drum spurs and the straight, rather unstable floor tom legs. But other than these small hardware archaisms, the kit is the same as Ludwig's top-notch, world-leading drums of the era. Even the bass drum hoops are carefully inlaid, identical with those supplied on Ringo's kits.

Simon tells Rhythm, "I bought the kit in 2018 from Mark Jeffs of Rusty Drums, UK. The kit had one previous owner, in Massachusetts. I'd always wanted a '60s Ludwig in the Oyster Black Ringo finish. Being a lefty, the centre tom rail on the Club Date is perfect for me. Tom mount rails on Downbeats and Super Classics are normally positioned for right-handers, and price-wise those kits in this finish make your eyes water. However, even Club Dates are coming up in value."

For years Club Dates were seen as unfashionable, but more recently they have acquired a certain hip status. This led Ludwig to reintroduce a decidedly budget Oriental Club Date SE in 2012, followed by a professional American-built Club Date Vintage in 2016 in 20" and 22" configurations. They are no longer a cheap option though, and have maple shells with 'flat' Imperial lugs.

"I've gigged the kit several times with my tribute act, Sixties Retro," Simon adds. "The toms have a nice open punchy feel at mid-tuning which suits what I'm playing."



1. CONSOLETTE HOLDER
Ludwig's infamous consolette single bracket holder requires a spanner to position and tighten.

2. BASEBALL BAT LEVER
The drums are fitted with 'baseball bat' tone control mufflers which press the white felt dampers up against the underside of each batter head.

3. BOW TIE RODS
The bass drum tension rods are the vintage 'bow tie' design. By this time, Ludwig's top drums had a more modern streamlined design.

OYSTER BLACK PEARL
The kit is wrapped in Oyster Black Pearl, the finish made famous by Ringo Starr and The Beatles.

CENTRAL LUGS
To lighten both the cost and the weight, Ludwig used centrally positioned double-ended Classic design lugs.

DATED HARDWARE
The straight floor tom legs and bass drum spurs are of the older and more primitive style.

"I'VE GIGGED **THE KIT SEVERAL TIMES** WITH MY TRIBUTE ACT, SIXTIES RETRO. **THE TOMS HAVE A NICE OPEN PUNCHY FEEL AT MID TUNING** WHICH SUITS WHAT I'M PLAYING."

OWNER, SIMON WAGSTAFF

NEED TO KNOW

CHOICE OF FINISHES
The Club Date could be specified with chrome or nickel plating and considerably cheaper lacquered finishes instead of pearl wraps.

VINTAGE DATING
Ludwig's keystone badges have serial numbers which enable owners to date their drums fairly accurately, in this case to 1966.

SIMON JOHN'S VINTAGE SHOW
The kit belongs to Simon John Wagstaff, founder of the Simon John Vintage drum show. See: vintagedrums.co.uk.

SUPERSTAR CLASSIC

THE MOST AFFORDABLE 100% AMERICAN MAPLE KIT ON THE MARKET*

For more than forty years, the Superstar name has stood for groundbreaking design, superior build quality, sterling tone, and clear projection. Superstar Classic once again upholds tradition by raising the bar for discerning drummers—and remarkably—does it while also lowering the price. Drawing on Superstar of the past, its classic TAMA T-shape badge and streamlined low-mass single lugs point to the simpler state of art of the 70's, while the ingenious Star-Mount system and new thinner gauge 100% maple shells eclipse anything in its class.

* Market Research 14/11/19

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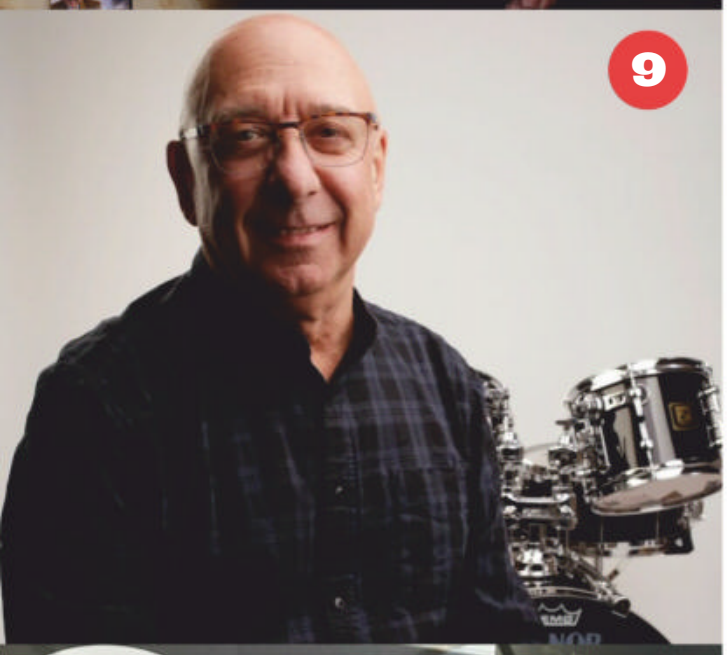
PICS FROM PLANET DRUM

Share your latest and greatest drumming moments here!



1. "Me with Stewart Copeland when I worked for him on the Letterman show for Drum Solo Week 2011. I own the complete setup he used!" *Aaron Kennedy*.

2. "Clem Burke/Elvis Ramone and..." *Julien Francis Clapperton*.

3. Louise King (Rhythm) and Kaz Rodriguez taken at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club.

4. "Brian Downey of Thin Lizzy, on tour with his Alive and Dangerous band. Totally on top of his game... I'm the drummer for Cynic (UK) the NWoBHM band. We released Suicide (1983) and Suburban Crisis (2008). *Tim Batkin*.

5. Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain has joined the British Drum Co. and will play their Legend Series, appropriately enough. Here he is with our Gear editor Tom Bradley.

6. "Last year my band Who Killed Nancy Johnson? were doing a live session on Radio Woking. Rick Buckler from The Jam popped in." *Mark Wren*.

7. Alan 'Sticky Wicket' (left) and Roy Holliday. Sticky leads his own Swing Orchestra, and has played with Steve Marriott, Roger Daltrey, Van Morrison and Joe Cocker among others. Roy Holliday was the managing director of Pearl UK and named the Export kit, the world's biggest selling acoustic drum series.

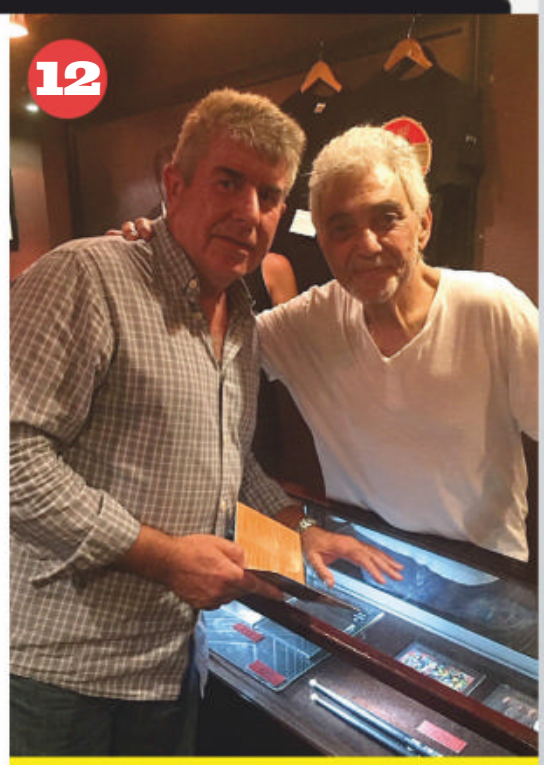
8. Rhythm's Geoff Nicholls with Simon Wagstaff (left), the founder of the Simon John's Vintage Drum Show. We source all the kits for our Vintage View pages with help from Simon. Go to vintagedrums.co.uk.

9. Henry Spinetti was Eric Clapton's drummer and has worked with Paul McCartney, Pete Townshend, Procol Harum, and more. He also drummed on international hit 'Baker Street' by Gerry Rafferty.

10. Simon Phillip (left) and Colin Woolway (Rhythm). Colin was at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club to see Simon's band, Protocol, play on their 30th Anniversary Tour.

11. "Meeting Ash Soan at the UK Drum Show last year. His clinic was mind-blowing... We watched him in awe even though there were no mad Instagram-style chops involved. A genuinely lovely and humble man." *Hayley Johnson*.

12. Steve Gadd and me, July 2019. *Tony Scullion*.



SEND US YOUR PICS

(or it didn't happen!)

Whether it's meeting your drumming hero, sitting behind a shiny new kit or headlining the local pub with your band, show us what's been banging your drums lately. The best pictures get into print every issue. **Email them to us at info@rhythm-online.com or tweet them to us @RhythmMagazine.**

Rhythm

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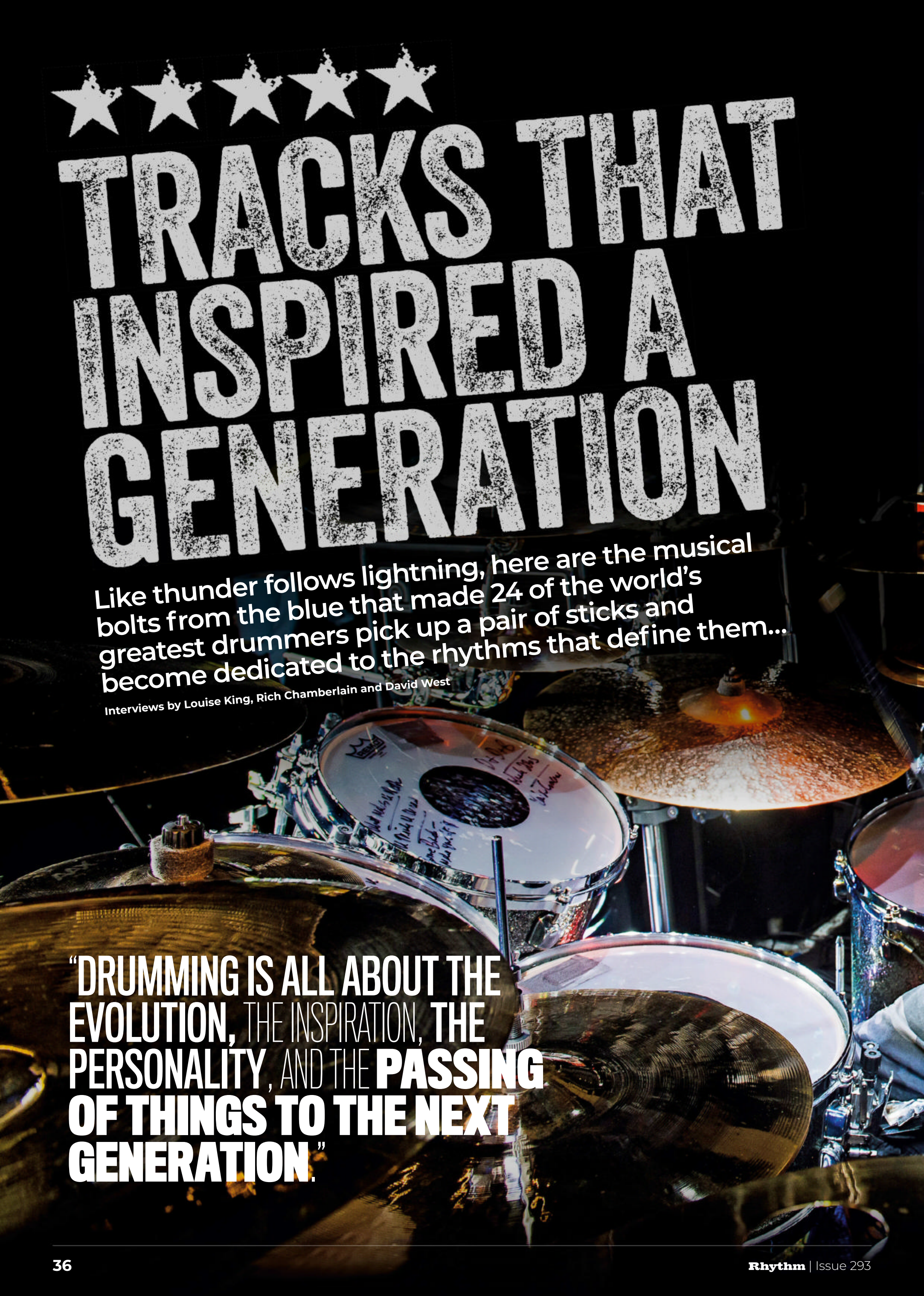
TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

Like thunder follows lightning, here are the musical bolts from the blue that made 24 of the world's greatest drummers pick up a pair of sticks and become dedicated to the rhythms that define them...

Interviews by Louise King, Rich Chamberlain and David West



"DRUMMING IS ALL ABOUT THE EVOLUTION, THE INSPIRATION, THE PERSONALITY, AND THE **PASSING OF THINGS TO THE NEXT GENERATION**."

Mike Portnoy

‘La Villa Strangiato’
Hemispheres (1978) – Rush
Drummer: Neil Peart

“I was in High School when I first heard *Hemispheres*, and was floored by the virtuosity and level of musicianship on it. It was the ultimate, progressive, technical achievement and, at that time, you just didn’t expect music like that from a rock band... Neil Peart subsequently became one of my biggest influences, and I was lucky enough to discover his drumming at a point in my career when I wanted to get better, play more complicated things and explore odd time signatures.

“‘La Villa Strangiato’ was my Olympic drum challenge! Up until then, my heroes had been more 4/4 pocket groove guys – like Ringo, Moonie and Bonham – but this is *the* track that taught me how to play long, progressive figures and untraditional arrangements, and pushed me in a whole new direction. Back then, of course, we listened to records and there is something to be said for using your imagination to work out what a drummer is playing. You couldn’t just click on something and watch them like you can today. We had to work harder to learn – especially when you are talking about a 10 minute instrumental track like this! – but I relished the challenge.

“At that time, no other drummer had a kit as big as Neil’s and I was fascinated by the concert toms, percussion, and all the other knick-knacks that he had in his set-up. Neil was a Tama guy in the ’80s and, when I had finally saved up enough money, I remember modelling my first Tama Imperial Star kit after him!

“Drumming is all about the evolution, the inspiration, the personality, and the passing of things to the next generation. Discovering Rush and Neil Peart at that point in time put me on a course with Dream Theater that would change my life, and define my career. We are friends now, but I didn’t actually meet Neil until 2007, when I interviewed him for a guest editorship I was doing with Rhythm. If I had met him under any other circumstances, I think I would have been afraid to bring up drums, or Rush, but I can’t tell you how great it was to have an excuse to be the ‘fan boy’ and ask him all the questions I’ve ever wanted to!”

Image: Rhythm

> “HEARING THIS TRACK ALWAYS PUTS A SMILE ON MY FACE AND TAKES ME RIGHT BACK TO THAT CLUB... IT’S A TIMELESS PIECE OF WORK AND IT REALLY DID CHANGE EVERYTHING FOR ME.”

Andy Gangadeen

‘Block Rockin’ Beats’
Dig Your Own Hole (1997)
The Chemical Brothers

“Everything changed in my head when I heard this track at Turnmills club in London – it literally blew my mind. The way the beats kick in alongside that audacious bass line, and the idea that someone could take a break which was originally played live by a drummer and turn that sample into another, incredibly impactful art form. It’s a great reinvention of something that was amazing in the first place, and it set me off on my own mission to recreate, and play live, the energy that I had felt that night. I was obsessed!

“This was the birth of the breakbeat era and, alongside that, the jungle/drum and bass scene was happening too... I was out night after night at all these different clubs, and that new electronic sound made London an incredibly vibrant place to be. Witnessing something that early on was dead exciting, and this track – that I’d watched the Chemical Brothers tweak, and perfect, during their reign at Heavenly Social nights at Turnmills from 1996 to 1998 – went straight to number one when it was released, and also won a Grammy. They were clearly cultivating something special and very important, and I was completely caught up in the whole scene.

“Back then, of course, it was hard to recreate this sound live because the technology was quite limited – but it’s so different now, and there has been an enormous amount of investment in that area. Playing pads isn’t frowned upon anymore, and it’s great to see drummers having easy access to such great, affordable gear. And being able to add those sounds to your drumming palette, adds a whole new level of expression.

“Hearing this track always puts a smile on my face and takes me right back to that club... It’s a timeless piece of work and it really did change everything for me.”

Image: Tom Oldham

Images: James Cumpsty

Steve Gadd

'Jet Song'
West Side Story (1962)
– Oscar Peterson Trio
Drummer: Ed Thigpen

"What immediately hit me when I first heard this track was the musicality – both the individual expertise on the instruments, and how well these guys all play together as a band. They groove so hard – man, I love those grooves – and, even now, I still can't believe how much music is coming from only three people. The arrangement and the playing are just great and, for me, it's also about the thought that has so obviously gone into everything you are hearing...

"I was in high school, and still living at home with my parents, when I first heard 'Jet Song'. I had been playing drums for a while by this point, but what I learnt from listening to Ed (Thigpen, drums), Ray (Brown, double bass), and Oscar (Peterson, piano), was how to play and interact with other musicians, and how to really get the most out of that. This track also made me appreciate the importance of the arrangements, and the importance of the groove. Of course, I love Ed, but 'Jet Song' is about the fact that *everyone* can play. It isn't just about him, or the drumming – it's about the music, and how Ed interacts and plays with the other people around him. As a young drummer, that was an incredibly important lesson to learn.

"When I was coming up, Ed was such a generous teacher to the younger generation of drummers. He made himself available to us, was a very down to earth and warm, and invited questions and conversations about music. In preparation for this interview I played 'Jet Song' for my wife, Carol, and, I have to say, it still kills me now!"

Taylor Hawkins

‘Spirits In The Material World’

Ghost In The Machine (1981) – The Police

Drummer: Stewart Copeland

“I remember my older brother – who influenced me a lot when it came to music - handing me a copy of *Zenyatta Mondatta* with the words, ‘If you can play like this guy and learn some of these licks, then I’ll consider listening to you play the drums...’ That was very early on in my career and my first introduction to The Police – I had only just started playing and I don’t think I even had a proper kit by then!

“I really loved their next record, *Ghost In The Machine* – especially ‘Spirits In The Material World’. It’s a totally awesome, amazing and tripped out pop song, but the thing with it is that it’s so hard to find the ‘one’... There is something about the way Sting phrases the vocals, and how the bass is on top of the drum track, that makes it difficult. The way everything else is moving around the beat is just insane and, even now, I really need to concentrate on where it is the whole time when I’m playing it. Stewart will tell you that it’s just a one drop reggae beat speeded up but, judging by the many conversations I’ve had with other drummers over the years, I’m not the only one who finds it hard!

“When I first heard ‘Spirits In The Material World’, Stewart was *the* most important drummer in rock. He, literally and figuratively, flipped everything upside down. Even John Bonham sat up and took notice of him – and that’s a big deal... Stewart became one of my biggest drum influences and The Police were this beautiful marriage of punk rock energy – that came from bands like The Clash and the Sex Pistols – and this undeniable musicianship. They were phenomenal players, but hip and cool at the same time – which is a rare combination.

“The feel of a song has to make you move, sway and groove, but that doesn’t mean you can’t throw people through a loop at the same time. And that’s what I love about Stewart as a drummer – you learn to expect the unexpected... You’ll be grooving along, and then suddenly he does something that makes the song take a complete, head-scratching turn – and that’s just awesome! His drumming inspired me to take the excitement, creativity and element of surprise that I was hearing from him back into my own playing. And if you can do that, and still stay within some sense of pop sensibility, that is amazing.

“I’m now lucky enough to count Stewart as a good friend of mine. He knows how important an influence he has been on me, but I do have to hold back a little bit on my fan gushiness and not ask too many questions!”

Image: Stephen J. Cohen/Getty Images

Image: Sergione Infuso - Corbis

"'WIPE OUT', WITH ITS INFECTIOUS PERSONALITY, WILL ALWAYS BE ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREAT DRUM TRACKS."

Rufus Taylor

'Wipe Out'

Wipe Out (1963) – The Surfaris

Drummer: Ron Wilson

"I must have been about six when I first heard 'Wipe Out'... At that point I was already playing drums, but I wasn't really taking it very seriously – it was more just for fun. I remember my dad coming into my room one day with something for me to listen to, and he told me that if I could figure it out and learn to play it, I'd be golden...

"I loved it and 'Wipe Out' became my first real challenge as a drummer. It was also the first time that I'd really had a goal to head towards, and I played it over and over again – first on my legs, and then on the kit with headphones and a tape player. It was a pivotal moment for me.

"Not only is it a great tune – that you can listen to a million times and not get bored – it's a tune that is constantly moving and, as a young drummer, that really helped me to understand movement and fluidity, and what you can and can't embellish. I think the fact that I learnt by listening, rather than watching, was also important. It's the same kind of difference between reading a book and watching a film, because you've got a lot more to play with – and more places to go – when your imagination comes into it. You are able to understand, and interpret, what you are hearing in your own way – instead of simply watching something on a screen, or reading sheet music. All of my favourite drummers have their own style and sound – you hear them, and you know it's them – and I think there is a real danger of that identity being lost in this new way of learning only from the likes of YouTube.

"'Wipe Out', with its infectious personality, will always be one of the all-time great drum tracks and, for me, it will always be a treasured tune that I listen to regularly."

Image: David Phillips

Todd Sucherman

'Voyager (Prelude & Liftoff)'
Images (1986) – Bill Meyers
Drummer: Vinnie Colaiuta

"When I was asked to choose a single track that had some sort of influence on me, I had dozens of pieces flying through my mind. I went through obvious choices from Ringo to Moon, from Elvin to Tony, from Erskine to Gadd. But then I thought about the entire universe that is Vinnie Colaiuta.

"I could single out literally hundreds of tracks that Vinnie has recorded that made an impact on me, but sometimes a piece of music hits you right at a certain time in your life and that makes it all the more special. I spent one year at Berklee College of Music in Boston back in 1987. Vinnie Colaiuta was a favourite of mine and it seemed like his discography output was massive at the time.

"I remember hearing a couple of guys in the practice room hallway talking about this Bill Meyers record called *Images* and that Vinnie was, as usual, frightening. In those days there was a Tower Records across the street from Berklee and I went over to purchase this record I'd heard about. I'll always remember sitting in my dorm room and hearing it for the first time.

"It's crucial to note that this particular record was recorded live, direct to two-track digital – this means the record was being mixed live in real-time as it was being recorded. There were no fixes, edits, punching in and, if you made a mistake, you had to begin again. And did I mention that side one and side two were each recorded as full suites? That meant if someone made a mistake 16 minutes in, everyone would have to go back to the beginning. Did I mention that there was a full orchestra with strings, horns and woodwinds, along with an all-star rhythm section and percussion section? It was just shy of fifty musicians in the studio...

"My point is this: On 'Voyager (Prelude & Liftoff)', Vinnie's playing is so fearless, so brave, so ballsy, that when you take into account the high-pressure financial stakes of the recording, it's nothing short of astonishing. Vinnie's sightreading

Image: Jason Powell

"VINNIE'S PLAYING IS SO FEARLESS, SO BRAVE, SO BALLSY, THAT WHEN YOU TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE HIGH-PRESSURE FINANCIAL STAKES OF THE RECORDING, IT'S NOTHING SHORT OF ASTONISHING."

chops are legendary and the most beautiful choices of orchestrations take place at an astounding rate in real-time.

"The drums do not enter until the 2:09 mark and 20 seconds later it explodes into arguably the most ferocious half-time shuffle ever recorded (with all respects to Purdie, Porcaro and Bonham). Just listen to the jabbing, pointed forward motion the groove has, but it's still pocketing so hard. No easy feat. His use of crash cymbals without bass drums to hit anticipations (2:50) are very hip. The piece moves into a regular shuffle and Vinnie plays a hi-hat snare figure 'Vinnie style' at 3:03, right before the tambourine figure honours the half-time feel over Larry Carlton's guitar solo. Listen to the orchestrations Vinnie chooses at 3:57 through 4:06 - it goes by fast, but there's so much going on there. Then the snare drum roll played perfectly with the trill of the flutes at 4:08 launches into one of the most thrilling musical build-ups I've ever heard— into four different drum breaks that are played with such dynamics, personality, musicality and technical brilliance, with complete attitude and clarity of articulation. This is the stuff of legend played by the only guy in the world who can 'compose Mona Lisas on command'. The final moments to the conclusion of the piece are equally thrilling.

"I feel the same sense of awe when I hear this now as I did some thirty-odd years ago... What did I learn from it? To try to have that fearless spirit - which I fall short of in comparison - but I often think about that while playing. I realised that if I make a mistake, nobody dies, and I learned you don't have to be named Purdie, Porcaro or Bonham to rule at half-time shuffles.

"Not only is Vinnie the deepest and arguably greatest drummer of all time, but one of the heaviest musicians of all time. I can't think of another musician on *any* instrument who can play all styles – Latin, metal, jazz, big band, be-bob, Brazilian, pop, whatever – and play it steeped in the idiosyncratic traditions of said genre, while pushing the existing envelope into musical concepts that had never existed in the style before he played them. Always astounding, always his authentic self, always musical, always hip, always singularly unique, always grooving, always supportive, always mind-boggling... Always Vinnie Colaiuta."

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

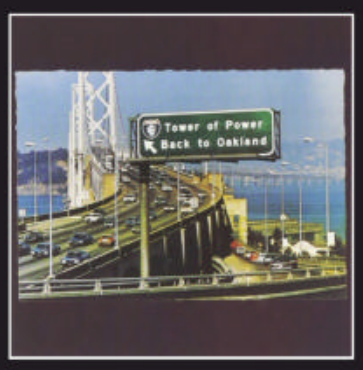
★★★★★

Ash Soan

'Oakland Stroke'

Back to Oakland (1974) – Tower of Power

Drummer: David Garibaldi



"This 'Oakland Stroke' is quite poignant to me and it's weird how life rolls. I first heard it in 1989. A bass player named Neil Fairclough who I was at college with turned me onto this song. I was 19 and had never heard of Tower of Power at that point. This bass player wanted to get a band together and wanted someone to play the drums like David Garibaldi. He asked around saying, 'Which drummer is into grace notes?' – and that was me! This particular song is one of the hardest Tower of Power tunes to play. It's a particularly naughty groove. People ask me if I practise, and I don't sit and practise, but what I will do is go back to things that inspired me and things that I haven't quite nailed. I do feel very good about 'Oakland Stroke' now though – I can play it at record speed.

"The sound of the drums hit me when I first heard the track, it was so funky. I sometimes try to emulate that sound in my studio and it's very difficult to do it properly. Back when I first heard it I had no clue as to what he was playing. I understood that stuff was going on between the backbeats, because there's no real backbeat on that groove, and it ticked so many boxes for me. I was hungry to learn about rhythm and grace notes, and that groove was one of the most complex grooves I'd heard and yet, fundamentally, it was just a funky groove. But when you pick apart what he is doing, it's proper maths, it's insane! I've spoken to guys like Sput [Searight] and Mark Guiliana about it because every drummer in the world has thought, 'Hang on a minute, what's going on?' with that groove. Mark says it's all about knowing when to close your hi-hat. It's only in the last couple of years that I've understood the groove properly and have been able to play it. It's one that you can't play cold, you have to warm up first. I'm not good enough to do that, but I'm sure David could probably just sit down cold and play that groove.

"What is strange now is that David is a friend of mine. He sent me a message a few years ago saying I was carrying the torch that drummers like him started, and he liked what I was doing. It's like, with 'Oakland Stroke' you need chops to play that groove, but it was never chops for chops' sake. It's groove chops rather than speed chops. He wasn't even aware when he reached out that I had been blown away by his playing all those years ago. Now I go out for something to eat with him and we talk about drums and weirdly he asks for my thoughts on music. He values my opinion – that is so weird!"

Image: Leon Neal/AFP via Getty Images

"WHEN THAT RIFF STARTS, YOU'RE **WONDERING WHERE IT'S GOING TO GO** AND **GINGER** COMES IN STRAIGHT **ON THE 'ONE' AND IT'S LIKE, 'WOAH!' HE NAILS IT TO THE FLOOR.** IT'S SO UNIQUE IN ITS CONSTRUCTION, **IT'S AMAZING.**"

Steve White

'Sunshine Of Your Love'
Disraeli Gears (1967) – Cream
Drummer: Ginger Baker

"As a kid, I loved people like Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. When I got to about 15, I had an encounter with Ginger Baker. We both went to the same school. I told the careers teacher that I wanted to be a drummer, and this careers teacher had actually taught Ginger. He wrote a letter to Ginger's mum telling her about me. I got a letter back from Ginger telling me to keep practising and good luck. That gave me the inspiration and I went out and bought *Disraeli Gears* which has 'Sunshine Of Your Love' on.

"Hearing that song was a real lightbulb moment for me. When I listened, not only did I think what a great drummer Ginger was, but I could also hear Ginger playing like those jazz guys I loved – but it was in a rock situation, which was a more likely way forward for me. At the time, as a 15-year-old kid in South London, I was more likely to be playing rock than big band jazz.

"I fell in love with Ginger's drumming; he was an innovator. 'Sunshine Of Your Love' is one of my favourite singles of all time. It's a great pop record and opened me up to the idea of having a British sound to your drumming. When that riff starts, you're wondering where it's going to go and Ginger comes in straight on the 'one' and it's like, 'Woah!' He nails it to the floor. It's so unique in its construction, it's amazing.

"I got to meet him about two years later when I was 18. I introduced myself and that meeting really inspired me. Later when I was working with Paul Weller, I wanted to pay homage to Ginger and I did on the track 'Sunflower'. That track leads with the toms and the backbeat was reversed, which is basically what Ginger did on 'Sunshine Of Your Love'. So that was my thank you to Ginger. May he rest in peace."

Images: James Cumpsty & Joby Sessions

Dan Flint

'All My Life'
One By One (2002) – Foo Fighters
Drummer: Taylor Hawkins

"A lot of my early influences came from my dad and hearing music in the car – bands like Led Zeppelin, The Who and the Chili Peppers. Foo Fighters were a big one that my dad was into. I got into Nirvana later on in life, so it was the Foos first for me.

"When you're talking about the drums not just being there, but being perfect for the song, 'All My Life' shows the drums as an instrument – but it also shows Taylor and Dave being incredible musicians. A lot of drummers are guilty of just playing the drums, rather than being a musician, but 'All My Life' is perfectly weighted and the drums compliment all of the other instruments. It's an incredible song, rather than people just showing off at certain moments. Another thing is that it's not about playing the most complicated thing, it's about being tasteful and musical.

"Taylor is making his mark in the Foo Fighters here and really putting his stamp on things. Listen to those little ghost notes that he does, and I think he does those slightly differently to how Dave would do them. And this track has more of those lighter moments too, especially with the snare work. The reins are definitely off, and Taylor's going for it.

"You can hear the influence of Bonham in this track as well. Taylor, Dave and John Bonham were three big influences for me from a young age, and 'Good Times Bad Times' is another track that really stood out for me. Everything Bonham did was so tasteful, he just grooves. He could play a simple beat and you would know it was him, an incredible achievement. Also, you might think he's playing a simple beat sometimes but, when you try to play it yourself, it's actually really difficult to get into that pocket!"

Mark Guiliana

'Part I – Acknowledgement'
A Love Supreme (1965) – John Coltrane
Drummer: Elvin Jones

"When I first started playing the drums, I was playing rock and listening to bands like Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Soundgarden. When my first drum teacher Joe Berganini introduced me to jazz, it got me excited in a way that I didn't really understand intellectually, but emotionally it was very impactful. This record, in particular, it was much more of an emotional and physical reaction, more so than an intellectual reaction because I was young and I didn't understand exactly what was happening inside the music, but I still felt a deep connection to it.

"...This is the record that I've listened to the most in my life. I keep returning to it and it continues to be a deep source of inspiration. Even now after studying and trying to wrap my head around what Elvin is doing, it's still the invisible characteristics that are the most impactful, the spirit and the commitment to the music and the relentless pursuit of energy. The things that he's playing are fascinating, you can dissect those, but for me, it really transcends anything technical, it transcends the drum set, it even transcends music. It's joyful to experience that and it's as profound as art can be...

"There's jazz drumming before Elvin and then there's jazz drumming after Elvin. You'd be hard to find a jazz drummer in the last fifty years that has not been influenced by him. The essence of the way he played can be found in almost every jazz drummer since. Instead of putting him in context, it's almost like you put the context around him.

"I love a lot of different music but one of my projects is specifically an acoustic quartet which is the same instrumentation as this band. Even when I'm not playing music that might be similar to this, it's still absolutely an influence every time I sit down. He's like a window into what's possible on the instrument and what music can do. I saw him in 1999 at the Blue Note in New York. I got to meet him after the show and take a photo. I told him he was my hero."

Image: Deneka Peniston

Robert 'Sput' Searight

'I'm Yours'

For You (1978) – Prince

Drummer: Prince

"I was around 10 years old when I first heard this track and I remember being torn... Part of me had this overwhelming desire to dance, but the other part of me wanted to keep completely still so I could absorb every little detail of what I was hearing.

"What immediately struck me was the very distinct way every component corresponds to one another; it's unique and very clever, and to begin with I didn't know why. I'm a '70s baby and, after reading the credits, I realized that it was because it was all Prince – he played all the instruments and sang – and I was fascinated by that.

"I was already playing drums by then and, right from the start, the intro to this song sparked my interest. The way the drums respond creatively to the guitars during the intro is so graceful and subtle, then he kicks the groove in with this electrifying roll, and then suddenly we are off into a rock 'n' roll funk pocket that is undeniable. I'd never heard anything like it! Prince wasn't even known as a drummer, but just listen to the way he plays the solo at the end – it's beautiful.

"'I'm Yours' definitely developed my sense of musicality on the drums, by teaching my ears to not only be sensitive to playing melodically but to listen and react closely to the other instruments or parts. Because Prince played all these other instruments, his approach to playing the drums was different. He wasn't just playing a beat, he was playing parts that triggered the melody and complimented every aspect of the whole song.

"This is also one of the tracks that set me on a path to producing because I would take songs that I found interesting and try to duplicate them. By emulating and mimicking all these different instruments, I was already developing programming and production skills without realising it. I was doing all of that by ear, and there is a luxury to having to listen to something to gain knowledge about it - which is now being lost today with the instant accessibility of the internet. When you're able to watch it, you learn it verbatim but, when you learn things by ear by listening, you can internalize it and actually take in the spirit and character of what you are hearing.

"The first time I met Prince was the most embarrassing moment of my life! I was walking off stage after a performance at an awards show and suddenly he was right there side-stage... He said, "Funky music, my brother!", to me, and I just froze – everything I had planned to say if I ever met him went out the window. Luckily, I did have another chance to tell him what an inspiration he had been in my life, but unfortunately, I never got the chance to play with him before he passed."

Image: Rhythm

Dennis Chambers

‘Foolish Fool’

Foolish Fool (1969) – Dee Dee Warwick

Drummer: Bernard Purdie

“It was the sound that got me immediately – I had never heard anything like it before! The drum sound is so big, so powerful, and what Bernard plays is perfect for the song. With Bernard, it’s all about the rhythm, his ideas, and the groove he commands… It’s why so many people have had him on their records and, when you talk about the Purdie Shuffle, that just says it all!

“I started playing the drums at the age of four and was already playing in clubs by the age of six. I must have been around eight when I first heard ‘Foolish Fool’ at my mum’s house and, even at such a young age, it inspired me to play with power and conviction. The funny thing is though, Bernard is playing a small kit here – probably only a 20" or a 22" bass drum, but those drums sound enormous! It wasn’t until later that I realised that it had to be a combination of the room, the way the drums were miked and, of course, the way that Bernard plays, that created that incredible sound.

“After hearing this track, I started listening to a lot of Aretha Franklin tracks because Bernard was on them. I’d sit there waiting to see what little gem he’d come up with next… Meeting him many years later was just incredible, and it was so funny when we found out we were both from Maryland. We’d played all the same clubs and, when he was given the key to the city, he invited me down to join him. That was a very special day.

“Hearing Bernard that first time on ‘Foolish Fool’, or Billy Cobham with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, or Tony Williams… Those moments for me as a young drummer were like putting my finger in a light socket and not being able to sleep for 48 hours afterwards! At the time I thought there was no way in the world that I could ever play the drums like those guys, but they all challenged me to try. And that’s what being inspired is all about – you take that influence, that fire, that energy, how it makes you feel, and then you incorporate it into your own thing. That’s how we build our own voice as drummers and finding something that inspires us to do that is a beautiful thing. I feel so blessed to have become friends with all of these drummers that I grew up listening to and, believe me, it’s quite a moment when you walk up to them and introduce yourself and they already know who you are!”

Image: Monica Morgan/WireImage

John Fred Young

'Wishin' Well'

Electric Barnyard (1991) – The Kentucky Headhunters

Drummer: Fred Young

"My dad, Richard, and my Uncle Fred are both in The Kentucky Headhunters and, even though I can't remember the exact first time I heard 'Wishin' Well', the performance of it that I remember most is when they played it live at a big charity concert – Farm Aid – in 1992. I will never forget the reaction of that crowd and, even now, the memory of it still makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up...

"For a young drummer, it was the energy and intensity of what I was watching and hearing that moved me, and the incredible musicianship between the drums and the rest of the band. It was a real 'in the moment' feeling, and it showed me just how all these instruments could work together, play off each other, push and pull against each other – but all the while supporting the song. For me, that's what makes a great band – musicians that complement each other, trading licks and working as one and, for that reason, The Headhunters have always been big role models for all of us in Black Stone Cherry.

"When you meet Fred, he is this humble, softly spoken, laid-back guy but, once he sits down at the drums, he is a monster and his playing just captivates you. Of course, he is well known for his sideburns and showmanship, but he is also an incredible – and very musical – drummer. His solos are out of this world! Even if he wasn't my uncle, I would still be a huge fan of his drumming, and I can't begin to tell you what a huge influence he has been to me over the years.

"From a musical standpoint – even when you hear the recorded version – 'Wishin' Well' is so in your face... Listen to those tribal patterns that Fred plays in the verses, and the chorus interaction between drums and bass that just sinks its claws into you. It's such an 'in the pocket' groove. Fred literally crushes the drums – they are so tight, so rhythmical – and it's incredibly inspiring when a drummer is able to not only complement a song like that, but give it energy, and create the space for the bass and guitar to float on top. At the outro, Fred goes into this powerful, crazy double bass – probably the first time it was used on a country record.

"After watching Uncle Fred play 'Wishin' Well' at Farm Aid that day, I knew that I wanted to emulate that power, confidence, musicality, and larger than life showmanship, in my own playing. I hope that everyone who hasn't heard this track before will go now and take a listen and appreciate the drumming on it. It really is the epitome of rock 'n' roll from the South!"

Image: David Phillips

Kaz Rodriguez

'Rosanna'
Toto IV (1982) – Toto
Drummer: Jeff Porcaro

"This is the track that made me understand how groove could dance – that famous shuffle just made me want to move. There is also something anthemic about the drum part in general and it really was a game-changing moment for me when I heard it because that architecture behind the song made me realise just how epic a track could be. It has so many colours, so many textures – it blew me away. It was my first introduction to complex rhythm, and I spent ages trying to figure out how to play it myself. I'm self-taught, so I never had the lessons that I so wished for. I remember I even got into trouble at school – everybody could tell it was me tapping in class because it was the same bloody beat every time!

"I learnt a long time ago that groove can never be taught, though – it has to come, and develop, from within, and that's what creates a voice in each individual drummer. My goal was never to imitate Jeff, but to take what he was doing - especially with this beat – and try to make it my own. It's funny but when I'm doing clinics and masterclasses, people expect me to talk about Billy Cobham or the Mahavishnu Orchestra when they ask me about my early influences. But the 'Rosanna' shuffle was the first beat that I ever wanted to learn. Before the technical side of things developed for me, it all began with that fundamental groove, and seeing where else I can go with playing groove is still a big inspiration for me now.

"The goal for so many drummers is to make people move – it's the magic of playing this instrument and watching an audience react to what you are doing. I am one of many who have been inspired by this beat, and it is a testament to Jeff that he touched so many people, so deeply. To this day we still bask in his legacy because, when you play the 'Rosanna' shuffle, people instantly recognise it. That's the power behind it and that influence will go on and on."

Steve Jordan

'Blues March'
Moanin' (1959) – Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers
Drummer: Art Blakey

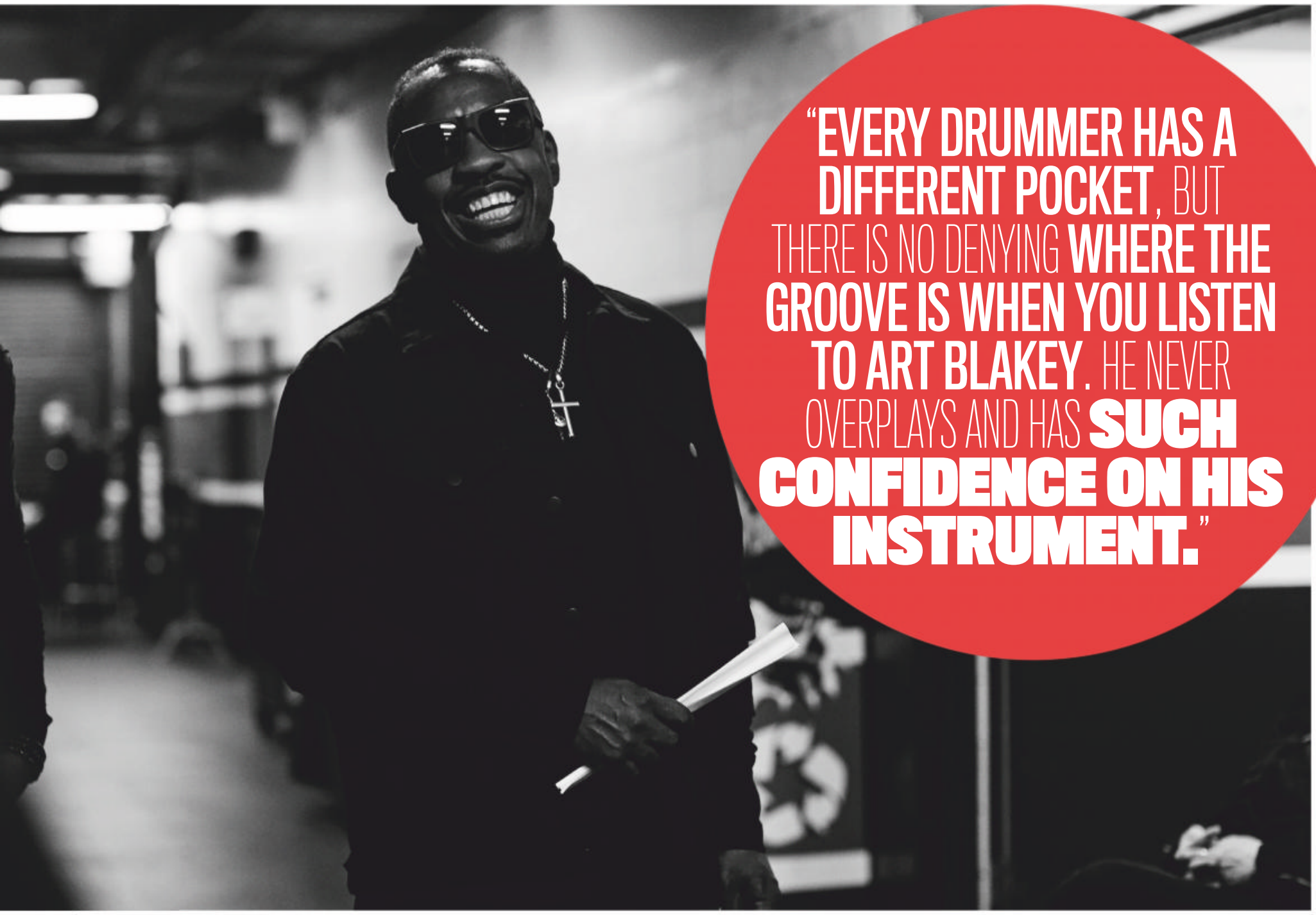
"My dad, Horace Jordan, was not a musician, but he loved music and drums, and there was always something great playing in our house growing up... I was around 8 years old – and already in the school orchestra and taking drum lessons – when my dad gave me Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers' 'Blues March' to listen to. He said to me, 'If you learn how to play this, you will have everything you need to become a professional drummer...' It was the most astute piece of musical advice that I have ever been given – made even more special because it came from my dad.

"This track has it all; feel, swing, that pocket, and the sound of Art's drums – that great Gretsch sound – is just tremendous. Then there are the fills, and it's all about those hands and the rolls. Just listen to those rudiments – press rolls, open stroke rolls... There's the march right there and then the drum solo. I memorised that solo and, as well as being technical, it's also very melodic. It's not just about showing off a bunch of chops – it gives the rhyme and reason.

"Every drummer has a different pocket, but there is no denying where the groove is when you listen to Art Blakey. He never overplays and has such confidence on his instrument. I describe him as a dynamic force and, when you listen to The Jazz Messengers, you can hear that he is the leader of that band.

"'Blues March' was one of the first things I learnt to play on the drums, and it has served me well over the years. One of the biggest thrills of my life was getting to meet the great Benny Golson, who wrote this song, and being able to explain to him what it meant to me as a young musician. Great track, great performance, great melody – and what a thrill that it was my dad that turned me on to such a cool tune."

Image: David Phillips



"EVERY DRUMMER HAS A DIFFERENT POCKET, BUT THERE IS NO DENYING WHERE THE GROOVE IS WHEN YOU LISTEN TO ART BLAKEY. HE NEVER OVERPLAYS AND HAS SUCH CONFIDENCE ON HIS INSTRUMENT."

Image: Dan Prakopcyk

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

★★★★★

Cherisse Osei

'Good Times Bad Times'
Led Zeppelin (1969) – Led Zeppelin
Drummer: John Bonham

"I first heard Led Zeppelin's 'Good Times Bad Times' when I was around 13. The guitarist in my first band gave me a mixtape. 'Good Times Bad Times' was track number one. I basically thought it was the best thing I'd ever heard in my life. The drum beat is really driving, full of life, and there's an offbeat Latin rhythm which John Bonham plays in the intro. You don't expect to hear a Latin groove at the beginning of a rock song so I thought that was brilliant.

"Technically one of the best things is Bonham's bass drum pattern because he plays 16th-note triplets on the bass drum. It had a very big impact on my drumming. I spent a lot of time trying to emulate John Bonham, I dissected this particular track and learnt all the drum parts note-for-note. It inspires me to think outside of the box and take more chances with my own playing and go with what I'm feeling.

"Two years after hearing that track, I bought the same snare that John Bonham used, the 14"x6½" Ludwig 402. That was my first ever deep snare, I'd only ever played 14"x5". It just changed the way I thought about drum sounds. Since then, I've always played deep snares. With Simple Minds, I change between a 402 and a Black Beauty, but they're both 14"x6½".

"I played 'Good Times Bad Times' at the Remo Drummer Night in 2008. I looked to the side of the stage and Jason Bonham is standing right there. That's not what I want to see when I'm about to play a Led Zeppelin song! I played the song, played the last hit, I looked up, and he smiled, gave me a big thumbs up. I was like, okay, I got the seal of approval, I'm all good!"

Image: James Cumpsty

Nate Smith

"IN TERMS OF THAT PARTICULAR TRACK, **THAT DRUM SOLO WAS THE FIRST THING I EVER HEARD LIKE THAT.** THE SONG IS IN A VERY FAST 3, HEARING **OMAR** PLAY A SOLO OVER THAT **CHANGED THE WAY I WAS LISTENING TO RHYTHM.**"

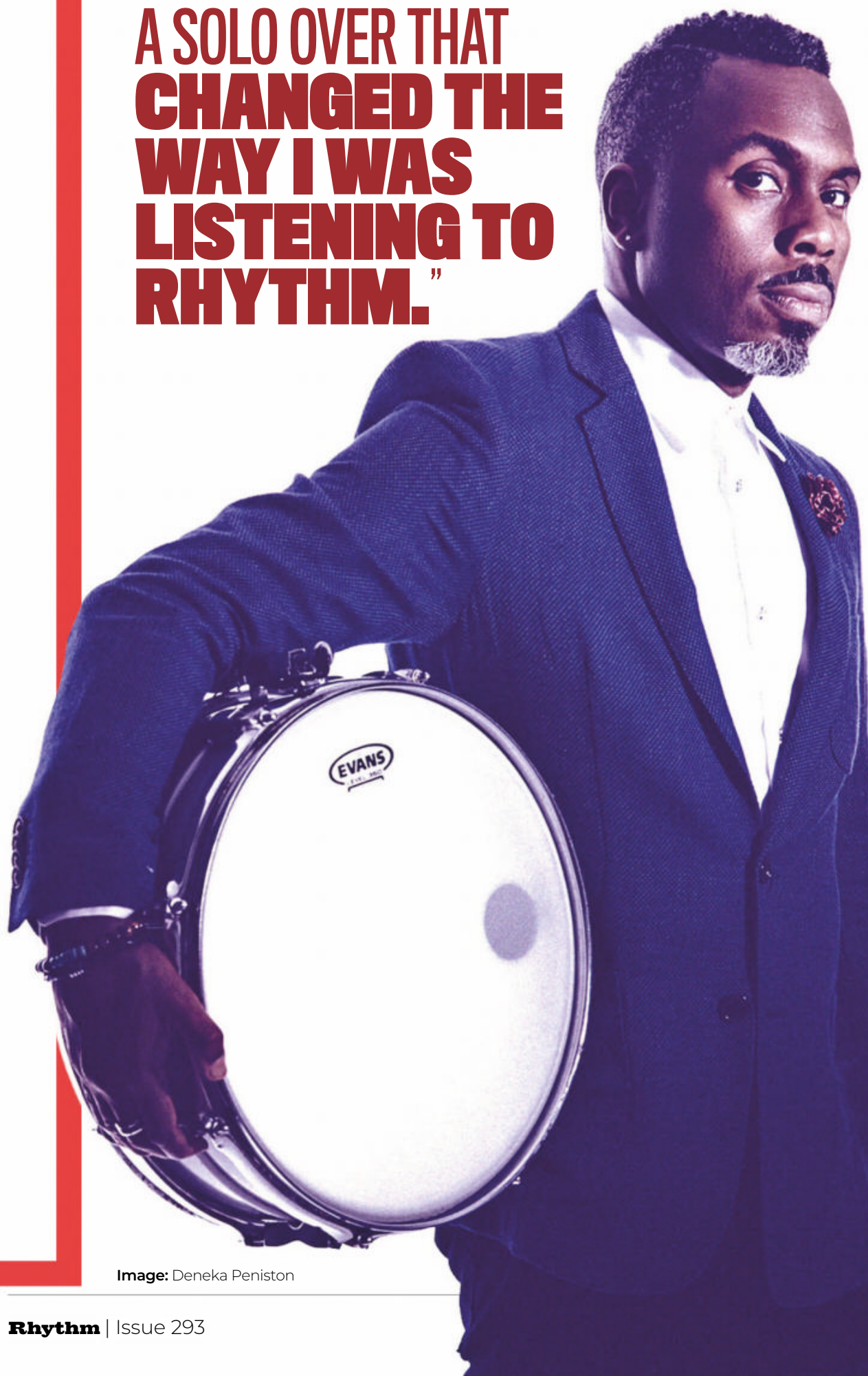


Image: Deneka Peniston

'I Burn For You'
Bring On The Night (1986) – Sting
Drummer: Omar Hakim

"I was 12 or 13 years old and I had just started playing a drum set. I remember seeing that movie thinking, man, these guys are so cool. It was an all-star band; Branford Marsalis, Kenny Kirkland, Darryl Jones, and Omar Hakim, and these two amazing singers, Dolette McDonald and Janice Pendarvis. They were reimagining all this music that Sting had written for The Police. I was a huge Police fan, but then I was like, man, this music sounds totally different with this band. To me it had a little more depth, it had all these different colours in it. In terms of that particular track, that drum solo was the first thing I ever heard like that. The song is in a very fast 3, hearing Omar play a solo over that changed the way I was listening to rhythm. Firstly, I was thinking in 4/4, I wasn't really thinking about odd metres, but I was also thinking about the way he played it, the confidence with which he played it, and it was so funky. My jaw was on the floor.

"It reframed how I thought about music. From a technical perspective, it got me into this idea of wrist speed, hand speed, the stuff I was studying in marching band, because Omar is playing some really fast singles. It's almost like he's playing fast jazz time on the hi-hat and cymbals, so it definitely influenced my approach to playing fast but soft. That was another thing he does really beautifully, he plays super-fast but he's playing dynamically, so that's something I took away from that. As a young musician you want to play fast and loud, but he's playing really fast and it's burning but it's so soft and the dynamic range is so wide. That had a real impact on me.

"Last fall I did the Armand Zildjian residency at Berklee College Of Music in Boston for four days and Omar is the chair of the percussion department there. I got to hang with him and tell him how much I love his playing but also I got to listen to stories. He grew up in Queens, playing with all these great musicians; Marcus Miller, Bernard Wright, working with Stevie Wonder, Sting, Weather Report, then he's playing with Madonna, Dire Straits, David Bowie, the list goes on and on, all the way up to Daft Punk. It was amazing."

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

★★★★★

Calvin Rodgers

'Until I Found The Lord'

Love Alive II (1978) – Walter Hawkins And The Love Center Choir

Drummer: Joel Smith

"As a young kid, I had this Saturday morning ritual that involved me going through my dad's records... I'll never forget putting this track on for the first time, because from the moment it started with that explosive drum intro, I was frozen to the spot. And as the track moved into that hard disco groove, with the dancing bass line, I literally had chills running through my entire body. I couldn't believe what I was hearing...

"I was always in love with the drums, but this track made me feel something that I had never felt before and I knew from the moment I heard it that I needed to make other people feel that same way. I was only 8 years old, but it made me want to chase that dream of playing on records and connecting with people – to overwhelm them in the same way that I had just been overwhelmed myself. It was the inspiration and the motivation for me to become a recording drummer, and to be part of something that could live on past the moment. To this day 'Until I Found The Lord' still captivates me and, anytime I am lacking in inspiration, this is what I go to, to give me fire - that shot in the arm. For me, it's a life lesson, and I encourage all the young drummers that I teach and mentor to check it out.

"Without doubt, Joel Smith was the greatest thing that ever happened to me on drums, and he himself was one of the greatest things to happen in gospel music... I play gospel music, and I'm allowed to be creative and take chances as a musician that I would not be allowed to take if Joel had not paved the way. I was lucky enough to meet him and, over the years, we became great friends. As he played bass too, I also had the thrill of recording live with him one time. Three months before he passed – at a special tribute to him in Carolina – I was able to tell Joel, in a room full of fellow musicians, just how important he was to me. He is the blueprint for gospel music; our map, our guide and our past, present and future. Everything starts and ends with Joel Smith, and he's the reason I'm here, doing what I'm doing today."

Image: Masalski Photography

Sheila E

'Come Back To Me'
The Sounds Of '66 (1966) - Sammy Davis Jr. / Buddy Rich
Drummer: Buddy Rich

"This is the first track that really inspired me, and I remember the day that my dad brought the LP home for us to listen to... *The Sounds Of '66* was recorded live at The Sands Hotel on the Las Vegas Strip, and opens up with dialogue. Sammy is talking to the audience and introducing the band, including Buddy Rich on drums, and it was so cool because it made me feel like I was there - even though at that point I had no idea what, or where, Vegas was!

George Rhodes was Sammy's musical director and when he says, 'Go, George!', they're off... What inspired me so much was the fact that Sammy Davis was a true entertainer, and he made me want to be an entertainer. My first instinct was not to be a percussionist, or a musician, but when I heard this track, I could see myself performing live, talking to an audience and hearing that crowd's reaction... It's always been about the big picture for me and having that vision of exactly who you want to be. Of course, it takes time to find yourself and it's a constant journey of learning, evolving, and moving forward.

"When I heard 'Come Back To Me', I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and I was so inspired that I learned that entire record verbatim. Growing up, we would perform in front of family and friends and our 'stages' were people's living rooms – with lots of cheering, clapping and laughter from our audience. I recently found a VHS tape of me all dressed up performing as Sammy Davis Jr. – complete with moustache! – at one of our Christmas parties. I laughed so much when I watched it, but it's actually pretty good!

"Even though it's Buddy Rich on this track, what's crazy is that I had no idea who Buddy was at that time, and I didn't really hear the drums. It's only later that I realised and appreciated how incredible he was. For me, what was so powerful was hearing Sammy and the audience's response and reaction to him. As a family we would always watch him when he was on the TV, and this man could entertain! He was a tap dancer, singer, comedian and he also played drums and organ. What an inspiration – he literally changed my life that day. I'm just sorry that I never did get a chance to see him live, but I did have the chance to meet him and he was a true gentleman."

Image: Paul Morigi/WireImage

Daniel Platzman

'Part II – Resolution'

A Love Supreme (1965) – John Coltrane

Drummer: Elvin Jones

"My hometown drum teacher - Billy Degnats - was amazing and he played me *A Love Supreme* when I was about 12. I had studied jazz for a couple of years and knew what 'swinging' was, but I had never heard anybody 'push' music like Elvin Jones before. I was forever changed and, even though I didn't understand exactly what Elvin was doing, I knew I wanted to be doing *that* when I played!

"The whole band is on fire here – everyone is catching the rhythmic phrasings of their teammates, and it almost sounds like it is written out sometimes with the way the coordinated hemiolas are exploding all over the place. The groove is the special thing, but it's highlighted by the dynamics. Notice how loud and supportive Elvin is to Coltrane's sax, and how much he brings his volume down – without losing any intensity – when McCoy Tyner is soloing. The end of the piano solo is Elvin and McCoy playing groups of threes over two whole choruses, with McCoy hitting a power chord at the top of the phrase. Elvin then skyrockets the intensity for Coltrane's solo... Listening to McCoy's left hand and Elvin's drumming together is pure groove – they are so in sync with each other it makes my face melt right off!

"Elvin Jones is such a special drummer. The beat is always being pushed forward and the true mastery is in the notes that he isn't playing. There's a lot of deletion and with those 'implied' notes, instead of 'ding-ah-ding', he'll sometimes go 'ding-ahhhh'...

"I warm up with this track every day when I am practising – usually on a simple 4-piece kit. Sadly, I never had the pleasure of meeting Elvin, but I did get to play with McCoy Tyner with the Berklee Concert Jazz Orchestra, and it was the happiest day of my life. I called upon some of my favourite 'Elvinisms' during one of his piano solos, and I managed to get a huge smile from him. The memory still gives me goosebumps..."

Rich Kass

'Trumpet Sketch (Milky Pete)'

A Rift In Decorum: Live at the Village Vanguard (2017) - Ambrose Akinmusire

Drummer: Justin Brown

"This track epitomises everything that I love about jazz and improvised music... The first – and only – time that I have heard it in this exact incarnation was at a concert at the Edinburgh Jazz Festival in 2015. 'Trumpet Sketch' was the last tune in the set, and it immediately opened my mind to different ways of playing music and drums that I hadn't even considered before.

"That night was the first time I'd seen Justin play, and his drumming is unique. There was so much for me to grab on to, and hearing so many ideas and such ferocity – while he was still being quite sensitive and getting a very colourful and melodic sound from the drums – was incredibly special, and very inspiring. The linear jazz grooves I was hearing evoked the spirit of both Elvin Jones and Tony Williams; frantic and energetic but without ever sounding academic. It was just so full of colour and there was obviously a strong spiritual connection within the group. They were always responding to something that was happening, which is the art of true improvisation. 'Trumpet Sketch' was the culmination of the whole set; it started with the drums and then, in the middle, became this slowly evolving musical machine, as it built and built to a drum solo at the end.

"I walked away that night with a determination to play with more spirit, to always be responding and to be in the moment, and it definitely also sent me down a path of trying to achieve some of those dense rhythms and sounds, with that almost primitive emotion behind them.

"The arrangement I heard in Edinburgh is different to the version on *A Rift in Decorum: Live at the Village Vanguard*, so potentially I will never be able to hear that track in exactly that incarnation again. Part of me is quite frustrated by that, but part of me feels that is the beauty of jazz and improvisation. It makes the whole experience more profound, and a poor-quality recording could never replace the memory, or how I felt when I was in that audience..."

Image: Adam Bulley

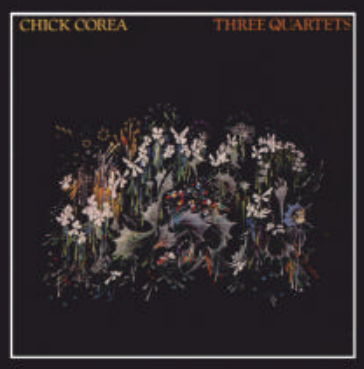
Image: Bryan Steffy/Getty mages

Sophie Alloway

'Quartet No. 2 – Part II (Dedicated to John Coltrane)'

Three Quartets (1981) – Chick Corea

Drummer: Steve Gadd



"It was Winston Clifford – another great drummer – who originally gave me a cassette of Chick Corea's *Three Quartets* when I was in my late teens. It completely blew my mind once I got my head around it and was a huge influence on me at that time.

"'Quartet No. 2 – Part II' is dedicated to John Coltrane. The playing on it is phenomenal and the intensity of the performance is quite overwhelming at times. For me though, what makes it such a complete piece of music is the fact that these incredible musicians are working it together and supporting each other. Their playing isn't selfish, or over-indulgent – it's a team effort – and all four of them almost influenced my drumming equally. Rather than just listening exclusively to the drums, I found myself being inspired by the phrasing of each of the players when I practised, and that all contributed to my vocabulary. One thing I must just mention is the sound of Steve's kit; it's amazing and so well recorded. I've never been a fan of high, 'pingy'-tuned jazz drums and – to this day – I like to play a similar kit sound to the one Gadd has here.

"Steve Gadd is an incredibly versatile player and, as we know, is the master of playing for the song. His feel on this track is spot on, his time is incredible, and by that I don't mean he sounds like a machine, because there is a perfect, and very natural, ebb and flow to what he is playing. Even though he has this enormously rich range of musical styles, he is always himself – without any hint of ego. He plays with incredible intensity, but with beautiful dynamics and an amazing groove. I think it's very difficult when you get to that level of technical proficiency not to use it all the time, but Steve plays only what is needed. Discovering him, and the other studio guys, and becoming aware that you could be recording with a rock legend one day, and then playing jazz the next, was an epiphany for me and incredibly inspiring. Steve is a very kind and humble man, and it was great to be able to tell him just how much his playing has meant to me."

Image: Filippo Alfero /Getty Images

Brian Bennett

'Get Me To The Church On Time'

Modern Jazz Performances Of Songs From My Fair Lady (1956) – Shelly Manne & His Friends

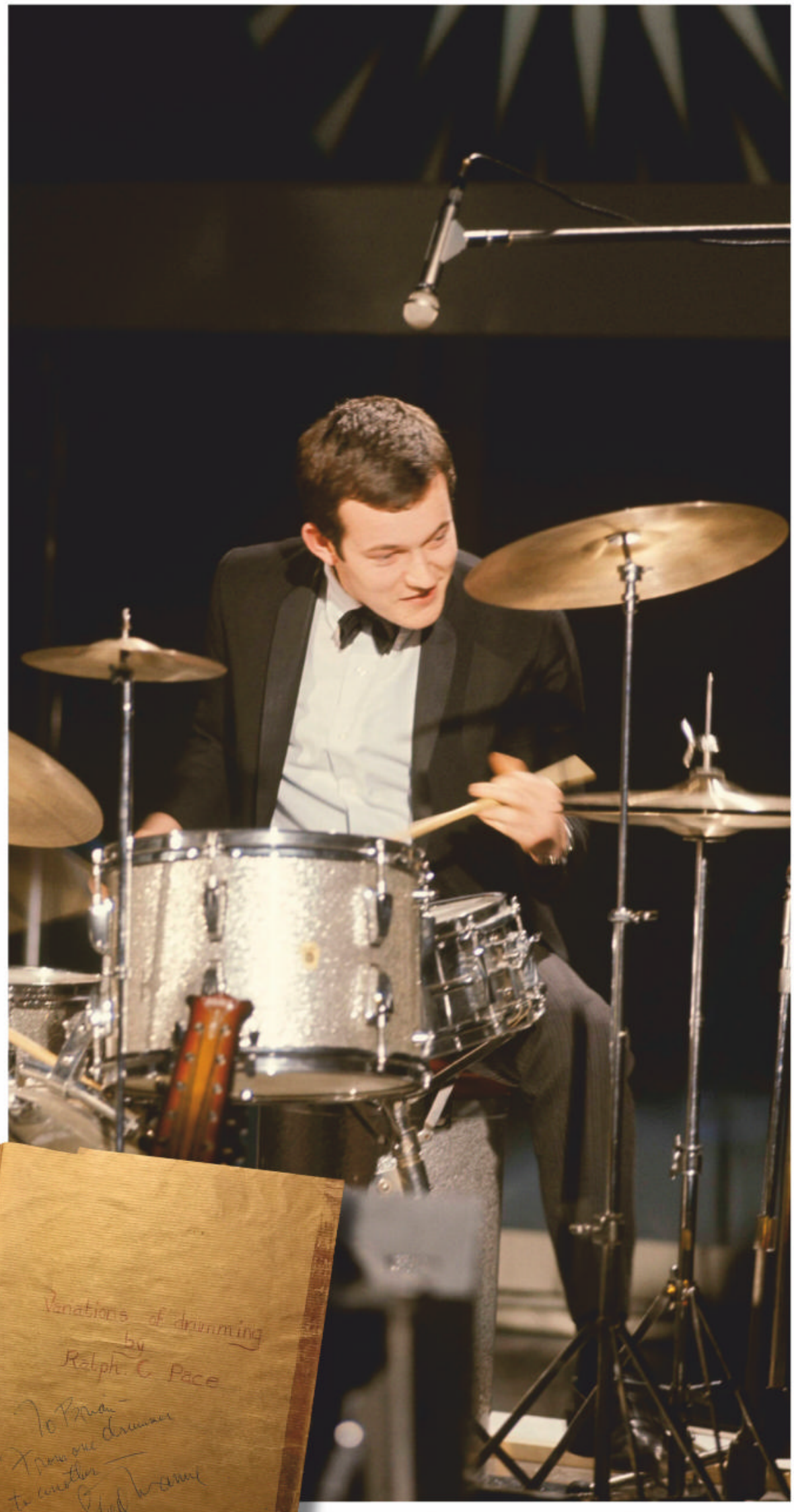
Drummer: Shelly Manne

"I first discovered Shelly Manne when I was at school - thanks to a jazz program on the Voice of America radio network – and those tracks sound as fresh and inspirational now as they did all those years ago. His style was sharp, his technique was fabulous and smooth, he could swing like the best of them, everything he did was recorded beautifully, and he became my hero – I wanted to be Shelly Manne! The first photograph I saw of him, he was playing this black, Round Badge Gretsch kit. Of course, there were no imports from the US into England at that time, but with my Trixon I was trying to copy the shape, colour, size and tone of Shelly's kit...

"I was around 20 when I heard 'Get Me To The Church On Time' – the first track off the hit album *My Fair Lady*. I was knocked off my feet by the beautiful press roll that comes out of nowhere at the beginning of the tune... It's played right on the side of the snare and starts as a whisper – you hardly hear anything – and then it kicks into this accent. The purest, cleanest roll that I have ever heard, technically perfect and perfect for the track... That was another thing about Shelly – no matter what he was playing, he would enhance it.

"'Get Me To The Church On Time' made me want to emulate the joy that I was hearing in Shelly's playing, the uplifting feeling that an inspirational drummer gives you – no matter what style they are performing. He was the consummate musician and there was this one rhythm of his – a typical Shelly Manne thing of 6/8 against a 4/4 – that took me ages to learn. I threw it into the middle of a Shadows track called 'Guitar Tango' - a big hit for us – and that was my little nod to him.

"It was when I was in Liverpool, playing with Eddie Cochran, that I got the chance to meet Shelly. We had just turned up at the Empire to get our digs for the week when Jazz at the Philharmonic walked in... They were doing the Sunday concert and, suddenly, there was Shelly Manne. It was a wonderful moment, and he signed the drum book I carried around with me to practise with. You see the reason we started playing in those days wasn't because we wanted to be rich and famous, it was because we wanted to be the best and, for me, Shelly Manne was perfection."



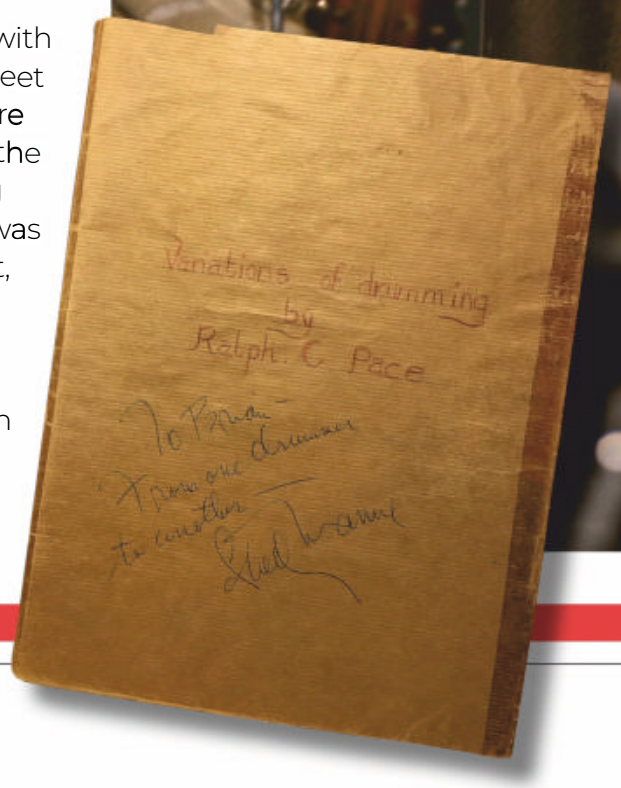


Image: David Redfern/Getty Images

David Garibaldi

‘I Got The Feelin”

I Got The Feelin’ (1968) – James Brown

Drummer: Clyde Stubblefield

“This is my favourite Clyde Stubblefield track, and it’s as fresh now as the day it was recorded; the true sign of genius. Nobody else was playing with this degree of sophistication in the funk world at that time, and James Brown – with Clyde in the drum chair – was at the leading edge of a revolution in new music. I had just come out of the military and I was stunned when I first heard it... At that point though, I didn’t have the skills as a drummer to even think about being able to play anything like it – there was so much cool stuff happening and things I had never heard before. This was more of a track that you learnt to play from, and it was only much later – when I studied and transcribed it properly – that I understood just how much is there, and how deep it is.

“Clyde’s playing here is in the same category as all the great jazz drummers – it’s fresh, creative, grooves hard, and has lots of subtle improvisation. Many of his unique, futuristic sticking ideas and combinations have found their way into modern drum set vocabulary and coordination – it really is mind-blowing what he was doing way back in 1968... ‘I Got The Feelin’’ is also a tremendous lesson in what we call ‘feel’. This illusive ‘feel’ is highly personal – as unique as handwriting – and here’s a great example of someone with his own voice. Nothing derivative here!

“As I listened to this track over and over, what became visible was the very subtle articulation inside the groove. The rhythms themselves are groundbreaking, but it’s the inner parts for me that are genius. Some notes are accented, some aren’t – but in very different and random ways. For instance, the snare drum is at times accented with a rimshot, and then at times it isn’t – these two variations being combined with ghosted notes. Also, the bass drum is sometimes accented and then has a softer attack, but always with a stronger note on beat one – which adds to that distinctive feel.

“Having the opportunity to get to know a hero like Clyde and to spend time with him was wonderful – for me, he is one of the greatest drummers of the modern era. I’m so very thankful for the legacy he left for us to explore and I am still learning from him today.”

Image: Tina Abbaszadeh

Gear!

The latest kits and the new gear drummers need – reviewed and rated by our team of experts

Hello and welcome to a redesigned and revamped Gear section! Our expert review team are all busy working professionals and will be able to give you the low-down on all the latest kits, snares, cymbals, hardware, percussion, electronics, software and more. Our impartial and detailed reviews will take out the guesswork and let you know where best to spend your hard-earned cash.

We also produce video demos for every product that comes to us for review which you can check out on our YouTube and social media channels. Now you can hear everything that you read about, recorded to the highest standards in our fantastic studio.

Tom Bradley

Rhythm Gear Editor

Alesis Strike Amp 12 **p74**

Meet Rhythm's Reviewers

Rhythm has been reviewing the gear drummers need for decades. Our team of expert reviewers have sat behind countless kits on stage and in the studio so you can rely on them to bring you the right verdict every issue. Plus find out their first drum kit...

TOM BRADLEY

With an unquenchable thirst for new drum gear, Tom is perfectly placed to be Rhythm's reviews editor. He's not only a longstanding member of our review team but also a lecturer at BIMM and a busy performing drummer. You may recognise Tom as the man behind the kit in many of the online gear videos on our YouTube channel.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"A Piano Black Yamaha DP series. It had been a whole two years since my first drum lesson so naturally, I was bursting with excitement when we headed to the music shop to pick it out. Once home I promptly slapped flame stickers all over the shells which I assume allowed me to play much faster."

MARK WHITLAM

Mark is a freelance musician who's played for everyone from Mercury Prize nominee Eliza Carthy through to jazz and funk legend Pee Wee Ellis. He is currently one-quarter of ECM recording artist Iain Ballamy's new band, featuring pianist Jason Rebello. Mark is a senior lecturer at BIMM Institute Bristol, where he has taught for the last ten years.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"I was eleven years old and got a Remo Mastertouch in Hi-Tech Grey (I'm sure the marketing team were trying hard to sell that rather odd colour!) with four toms in 10", 12", 14", and 15" for my birthday. With a set of clear Pinstripes on there, it served me for around a decade!"

Impression X-Hard Series p66

Yamaha Live Custom Hybrid Oak Kit p62

Ludwig 110th Anniversary Snare p68

Tama Superstar Classic Kit p70

Rhythm Verdict

The **RHYTHM RECOMMENDED** award is given to those products that score seven or eight out of ten. These are products that, although not quite scoring top marks, are strong products in their field.

The **RHYTHM STAR BUY** is awarded to those products that score nine or even ten out of ten for design, construction, function and value.

Rhythm Ratings

Here's what our ratings represent.

Poor: Sub-standard product	1 - 2
Average: Acceptable but uninspiring	3 - 4
Good: Above average	5 - 6
Excellent: Superior product	7 - 8
Outstanding: Impossible to fault	9 - 10

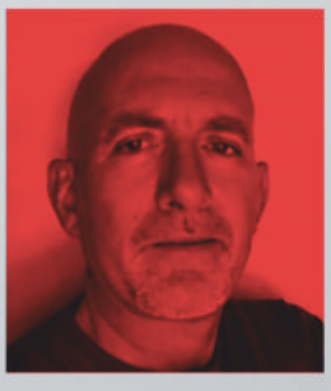
For videos of gear reviewed go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

GEOFF NICHOLLS

A regular contributor to Rhythm for over 20 years, Geoff is a musician, author, journalist, and lecturer. In the '70s he signed to Decca, EMI and Phonogram in various bands. He was then presenter on BBC's award-winning *Rockschool* in 1984 and 1987. His books include The *Drum Book: A History Of The Rock Drum Kit* and *The Drum Handbook*..

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"A Premier Olympic 4-piece in white Duroplastic. Cymbals were Kruts and Zyns. It was a dream after the junk I started on. I did my first gig (aged 13) with an ancient wooden TV cabinet covered with a blanket for a bass drum (I had a pedal but no drum)."



ADAM JONES

Playing for over four decades, Adam's influences are seriously varied. "I have sat kit-side in a plethora of pop, punk, ska, jazz, soul, folk and even glam rock bands; many of them average, some pretty decent and a handful seriously good," he says. "After all this time I suppose I really ought to know better, but some habits last a lifetime."

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"A 5-piece Maxwin in a silver wrap bought secondhand from a classified ad in the local newspaper. Also included was a pair of white concert toms, and the resulting 7-piece was subjected to prolonged and life-shortening sub-Keith Moon thrashings by the younger me."

Yamaha Live Custom Hybrid Oak Drum Series

Yamaha's latest high-end offering borrows ideas from the flagship PHX series and introduces yet another dazzling new finishing technique

Words: **Geoff Nicholls**

PRICES:
22"x18" bass drum, £1486.
10", 12" and 16" tom-tom pack, £1678.
14"x5½" matching wood snare drum, £576.

For decades Yamaha has sought to distinguish between its studio focused series (epitomised by the comprehensively overhauled Recording Custom of 2016) and kits which are more geared to live performance. This does not mean that any Yamaha series won't cut it in both live and recording situations, just that the design objective may be skewed a little more in one direction than the other.

So the clue today is in the title: Live Custom. The other half of the title has the words 'oak' and 'hybrid', causing our ears to prick up even further. Yamaha has – unusually in the drum world – promoted oak since 2002's Oak Custom and more recently with the 2013 Live Custom Series. Oak is evidently seen as the ideal tone of wood for live performance.

Meanwhile, the hybrid concept is taken from the top-dog PHX (Phoenix) Series and here involves the insertion of a thin black strip of phenolic (a dense plastic material) in the centre of the oak plies.

All the drums have seven plies - a triple ply of oak on each side sandwiching the single ply of phenolic. The shells are a wee bit thicker than those of many high-end drums, again emphasising the live power. Bass drums are 8.8mm, while the toms and snare are 7.3mm. Outer and inner oak plies are set horizontally. The inner ply is sanded normally and finished with a matt charcoal sealer. There's an inside cut routed at 45 degrees up to the outer ply which is rounded over for an ultra-smooth bearing edge (Yamaha's R1.5).

Ply Your Trade

The outer ply is visually striking with a different look to the previous gloss lacquered Tour Custom. Taking advantage of the oak's open grain, Yamaha has adapted a Japanese technique called uzukuri. This involves sanding down the soft areas in the wood grain, then coating the shell with a thin layer of black paint, after which the entire surface is sanded again before applying a final coat. The resulting deep-grained image is yet another Yamaha first, and offered in five colours. Pictured here is Earth Sunburst and there are three other Sunbursts in Ice, Magma and Charcoal. Plus a single Natural finish.

The badge states "Made In China". Yamaha is now happily boasting about the seriously impressive facility it's developed in Xiaoshan. This is where other top Yamaha kits (including the Recording Custom) are built. Examination of this fine kit confirms that wherever it originates, it's crafted with the utmost care.

While most measures taken by drum companies to optimise shell-resonance

"STARTING WITH THE 16"X15", WHAT A PUNCH! AN EPIC FIRST BLOW IS FOLLOWED BY A SURPRISINGLY LONG TRAIL-OFF. TRULY AN EXPLOSIVE BEAST OF A FLOOR TOM."

They Say:

GAVIN THOMAS
Drum product marketing manager for the Pro Music Division of Yamaha Music Europe, GmbH (UK).

What's the background to the Live Custom Hybrid Oak?
"The Live Custom kit was the first series to be made in our new production facility. We've since launched the Absolute Hybrid Maple and Recording Custom. The hybrid shells concept was initiated by our PHX series and when transferred to our Absolute Series the sound improvement was clear and the outcome successful. So it was decided the Live Customs could also be improved with this concept."

Who is this kit for?
"At first the Live Custom was known for heavier styles. Oak delivers a punchy sound to compete with the guitar amps on stage. We have enhanced that by adding weights in the bass drum to lower the fundamental and we've also added the hybrid shell and YESS-III tom mount to excite the shells and let them resonate freely. But in reality, the drums are really flexible and will deliver just as much as you put into them. When played quieter they have a lovely clear tone and are easy to tune, so they should not be pigeon-holed."

STAR BUY
YAMAHA
HEAD MADE IN USA
BY REMO

1 2

3

1. Earth Sunburst Uzukuri Finish
Yamaha dazzles with a unique type of wood finish, this time calling on the Japanese technique of uzukuri to offer five alternative colours.

2. Dominating Dark Aspect
Lugs and hoops have a 'Dark Silver' (black chrome) finish while the shells themselves have black painted interiors.

3. Secure Floor Tom Brackets
Yamaha's ergonomically shaped wing nuts smoothly clamp the floor tom legs and are again isolated from the shell.

4. Die-Cast Bass Drum Tension Hooks
The bass drum features solid die-cast tension hooks which are isolated from the wood hoops by moulded black plastic gaskets.

5. Small Imprint Absolute Tension Lugs
Shells feature Yamaha's small bullet design Absolute lugs, attached by a single bolt for minimum resonance disruption.

6. YESS-III Double Tom Mount
The two small toms are mounted directly onto the bass drum via the third generation YESS mount which maximises isolation and enhances sustain.

4

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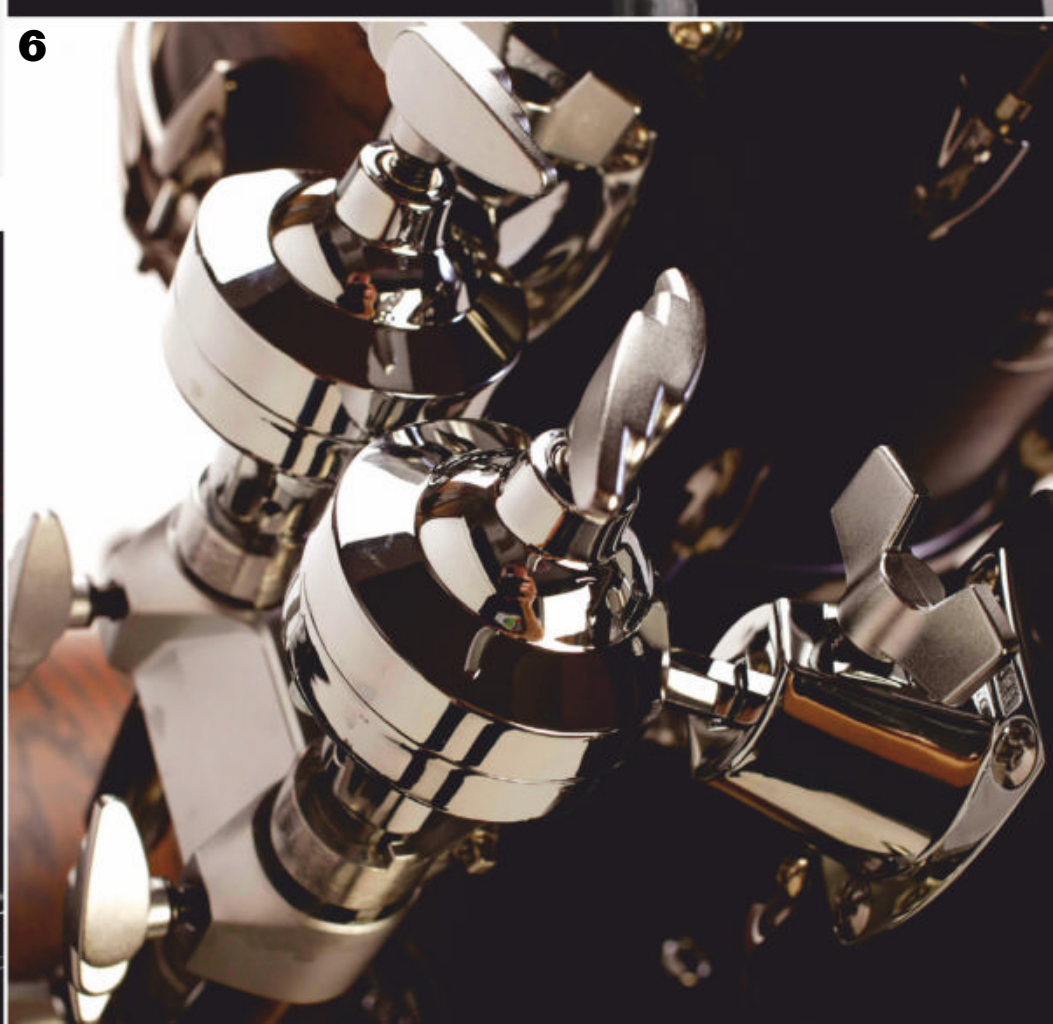


demand minimising metal, Yamaha has decided the opposite is right for the Custom Live bass drum. The thinking derives from the common practice when miking bass drums to insert a hefty weight inside the shell – a blanket anchored by a cast iron stage weight or similar.

So Yamaha has taken the unprecedented step of attaching mini, arrow-head stud plates inside the shell at each lug point. Effectively you have an outside lug and one inside too, adding extra mass uniformly all round. The stated intention is "to attenuate low-mid frequencies and focus the bass drum sound".

The tension lugs themselves are familiar Absolutes, finished in Dark Silver (black chrome), as are the 2.3mm triple-flanged Dyna-Hoops. This adds to the generally dusky, expensive image of the kit.

Packs a Punch

The toms arrive tuned way down, which actually adds to the wow factor in that they all have a clattery impact followed by a sizeable sustain. Starting with the 16"x15", what a punch! An epic first blow is followed by a surprisingly long trail-off. Truly an explosive beast of a floor tom.

This impression carries through the 14"x13" and 12"x8", both of which belie their size, Yamaha's choice of double-ply Clear Emperor batters maximising the stage-filling volume. As always, with the 10"x7" you have to find the sweet spot for that distinctive Gadd-Weckl blam that's such a Yamaha USP.

The 14"x5½" matching wood snare drum nestles comfortably with its winning combination of crisp edge and slightly dark, oaky timbre. Clarity of response is followed by a deeper sounding body than its modest 5½" suggests. The Q design snare mechanism is our ally here – it has a quality action and the 25 strand high carbon steel wires snap obligingly.

With the accurate bearing edges, the toms tune quickly, with no awkward flat spots or unattractive rings and whines. A full reverberant sound is easily achieved, and as you tune the drums up they remain in harmony, with no sign of choking or imbalance.

Although the picture presented here is of a big sounding, lively kit, playing softly is cool too. That super responsiveness means light sticks or brushes elicit plenty of rewarding tone.

All About the Bass

You have to admire Yamaha's willingness to try new ideas. Having spent years developing the nodal point mounting of toms for maximum sustain (as in the YESS-III mount seen here), for this bass drum Yamaha's muse takes a different path. The goal is to marry front-end slapping precision with a bass tone that has reduced middling, feedback-inducing boom.

A cynic might point out that the Recording Custom has full-length, heavy bulbous lugs creating a similar focusing/embracing effect. True, but here we have an alternative solution. The review Live Oak bass drum comes with its front head unported. Yet as it stands, the drum – unlike the floor tom which has massive sustain – has the same explosive impact but a tighter, more curtailed sustain. That is, it sounds focused with the front head intact and no internal damping – so something is going on for sure! The result is a bass drum which has a commandingly hefty, live-friendly crack, combined with a reduced rumble.

Not only that, but Yamaha is one of the few companies to continue with bass drum penetrating tom mounts (as also on the new RC). It's undeniably true that bass drums without such tom mounts sound less impeded. Yet old ideas persist, and tom mounts on bass drums integrate the whole set, produce a warm buzz, and further deepen the tone. Oh, and they make setting up quicker too.

Overall the set has a controlled and impactful vibe. Ideal for live, as the name suggests, with a great dynamic range perfect for sensitive performance, from ppp to fff. It's impossible to say for sure what the exact effects of the phenolic and the extra weights are (this side of serious lab tests), but what really grabs you is the sheer infectious fun and willingness of these drums. They encourage you to play.

"WHAT REALLY GRABS YOU IS **THE SHEER INFECTIOUS FUN** AND WILLINGNESS OF THESE DRUMS. **THEY ENCOURAGE YOU TO PLAY**."

CONTACT
uk.yamaha.com
Tel: 0344 811 1116

Verdict

This modern, bright and dynamic kit continues Yamaha's pursuit of cutting edge build ideas and unique finishes. It's great for live situations in any style, played loud or soft and for recording too.

Rhythm Rating

9/10

Impression X-Hard Series

Old school traditional Turkish manufacturing meets modern lo-fi sonic applications with these earthy-toned additions to the Impression range

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE RANGE:
£270 - £373.50
PRICES OF THE CYMBALS REVIEWED:
14" Hi-Hats £288
16" Crash £175
18" Crash £216
20" Ride £270
22" Ride £337.50

Turkey has long been synonymous with the birthplace of drum set cymbals. Over the past couple of decades, family-run companies in and around Istanbul have flourished, with their traditional hand-crafted approach to making cymbals providing an alternative to more mass-produced, machined options from the established brands. Impression is a more recent name in this group yet they have been around for nearly a decade and boast a dozen different lines of cymbals covering the range of styles any drummer may play.

The Options

The X-Hard range offer hats from 13"–16", crashes 16"–20", rides 19"–24" and China cymbals in either 18" or 20" diameter. All have been treated with sandpaper on the top and bottom surfaces after hammering, giving them a rustic look. One of the special qualities of hand-made cymbals is their unique appearance and – more importantly – sonic variations due to hammering and weight differences.

As such, a comparison of a handful of 18" crashes of one model would produce a wider variety in pitch and tonal characteristics than with automated machined cymbals.

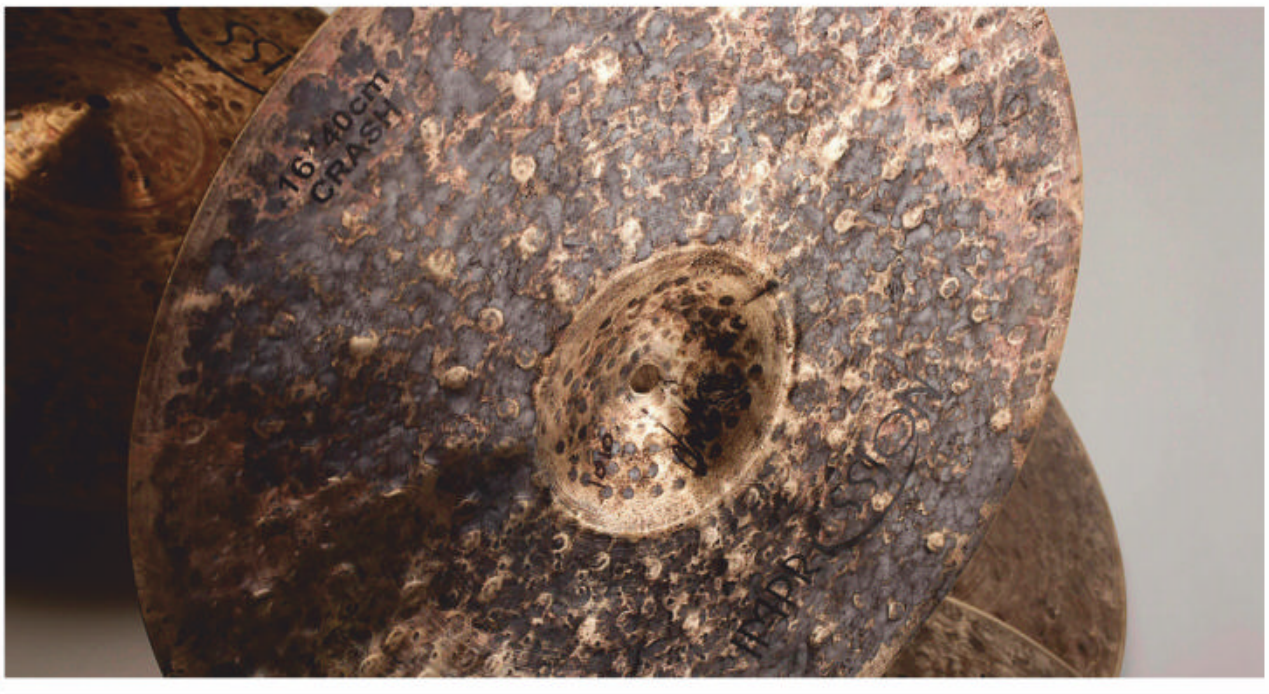
Test Driving

For this review, we were supplied with a 14" pair of hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes and two ride cymbals of 20" and 22" diameter. Before going into detail on each cymbal, I found there to be a generally cohesive tonal nature in this set of cymbals. Due to their unlathed nature (except for the very edge of the top side) they have a fairly short decay and a tone that is as earthy as their finish. There are no designations such as "medium-thin" stamped on the cymbals, instead, the weight is handwritten on the underside of the bell along with the cymbalsmith's signature. All have a little flex to them and show extensive hammering using two different approaches – one finer, the other a heavier, deeper pattern with evidence of more occasional hammering.

Hi-Hats

These particular 14" hats weighed in at 1010g (top) and 1170g (bottom) with their volume mirroring the medium weight pairing. They provided plenty of poke when played half-open to cut through the odd Marshall stack or two. Interestingly though, they play with more of a buttery, soft feel, like that of old school, thinner, vintage cymbals. The closed tone is still a little loose and rounded, approaching something between a James Gadson (think 'Kissing My Love') and a Steve Jordan kind of vibe, but with a brighter, higher pitch.

"THEIR **SHORT DECAY AND COMPLEXITY** IS FAR MORE SUITED TO **JAZZ, HIP HOP** AND **FUNKIER ORGANIC** SETTINGS."

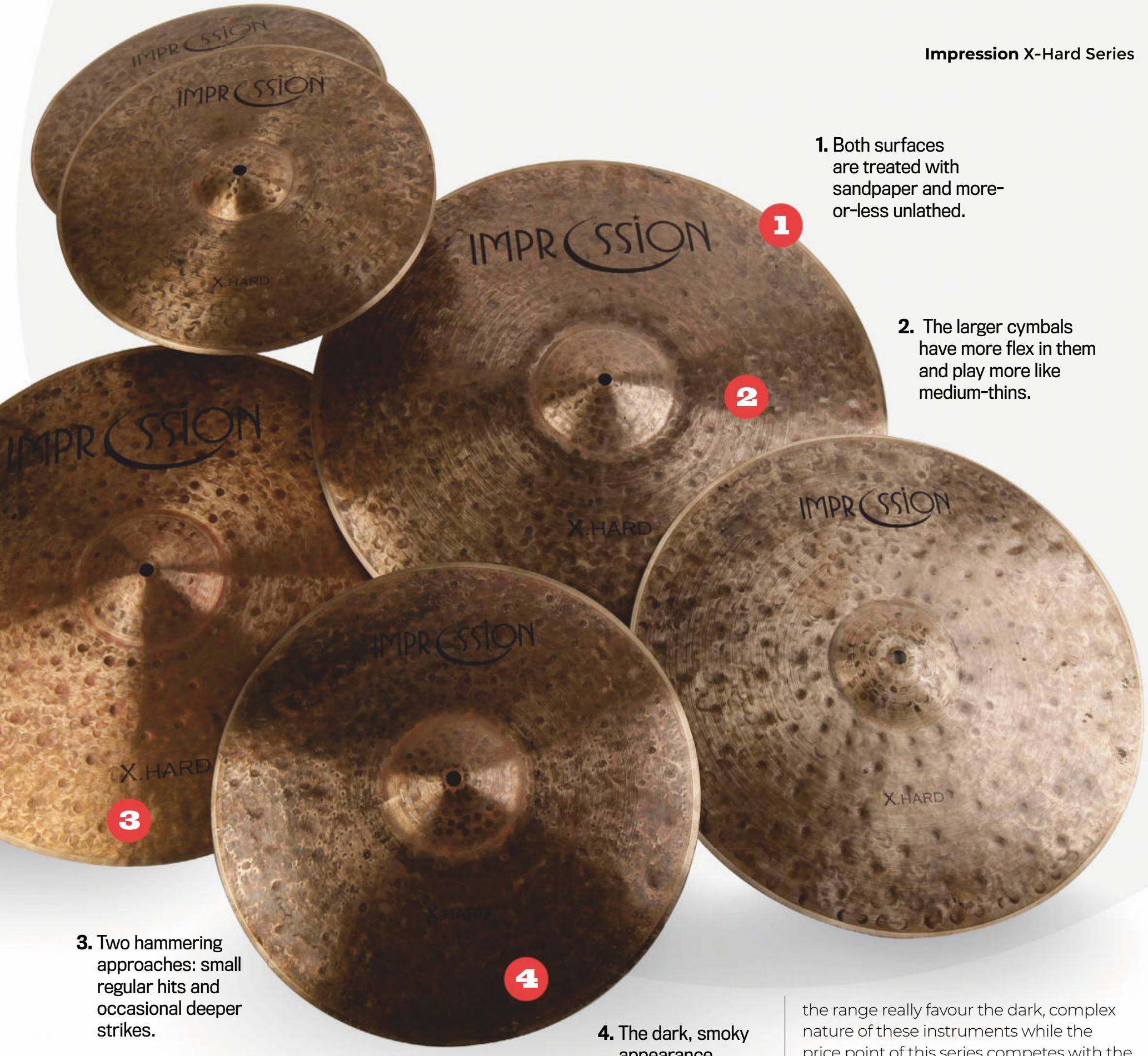


Crashes

Both cymbals have fairly trashy properties, with a complex variety of overtones, immediate attack and short decay. The 18" (1320g) is the more musical and versatile of the pair, with some richness to it, yet plenty of volume. Its smaller 16" (1010g) cousin is somewhat of an outlier in the whole set we were sent, with a rather abrasive impact and a quite pronounced gong-like note to it. It may lend itself more to being an effects cymbal, with an almost electronic sound to it, or stacked.

Rides

The two rides, with only two inches between them, have markedly different



1. Both surfaces are treated with sandpaper and more-or-less unlathed.

2. The larger cymbals have more flex in them and play more like medium-thins.

3. Two hammering approaches: small regular hits and occasional deeper strikes.

4. The dark, smoky appearance gives you some idea of the tonal properties.

natures. The smaller 20" ride (2215g) is on the heavier end for a cymbal of that size and as you would expect produces a focussed, relatively high pitched 'ping' with pinpoint stick attack. It's reminiscent of a heavier 70's era Steve Gadd sound in many respects, with some of that dryness we're familiar with, from albums like Steely Dan's *Aja* or Chick Corea's *My Spanish Heart*. The weight makes it difficult to crash without being overpowering but the pronounced stick attack and volume clearly favours a rock or fusion situation more than any acoustic styles.

The contrast between the two was quite surprising and shows off the variety of tones within the X-Hard series. The larger 22" (2500g) ride was much more mellow, dark and warm. It offered the potential to cover a range of musical bases with a forgiving attack and some warm, yet controlled, wash sitting underneath. This played more like a thin to medium-thin ride which crashed beautifully.

Good Impressions

On their website, Impression Cymbals state the X-Hard range is suited to "diverse situations, from jazz to extreme metal". I agree with the first part of this statement. However, their short decay and complexity are far more suited to jazz, hip hop and funkier organic settings than extreme, heavier styles. Sure, the attack of the 20" ride would easily cut it in a louder rock environment but the lack of sustain and wide range of overtones of the crashes, in particular, would likely get buried in the mix at a metal gig.

Having mixed and matched the cymbals provided, the combination of 14" hats with the larger 18" crash and 22" ride made for the best blend. I get the impression (no pun intended) that the larger cymbals in the range really favour the dark, complex nature of these instruments while the price point of this series competes with the premium lines of the established players in this field.

CONTACT
www.impressioncymbals.co.uk
Tel. 0118 328 2883

Verdict

Their dark, slightly trashy sound will appeal to any drummers looking to fuse modern lo-fi sounds with elements of vintage tones.

Rhythm Rating

6/10

1. Ludwig's expertise with brass shells goes back to the 1920s and the introduction of the legendary Black Beauty.

2. Though some of the components are sourced from overseas, each Heirloom Black Brass snare is assembled in the USA.

3. Ludwig's classic Art Deco-influenced Imperial lugs are found on the snare, brass-plated to match the die-cast hoops.

Ludwig 14"x5½" Heirloom Black Brass 110th Anniversary snare drum

A significant birthday for Ludwig provides the perfect opportunity to unleash a beast of a snare drum

Words: **Adam Jones**

PRICE:
£762

Ludwig's Heirloom Black Brass snare drum is one of several products launched this year to commemorate the American company's 110th anniversary. And it's quite a legacy Ludwig has to celebrate, with Ringo, Bonzo and Buddy all playing themselves into the history books sat behind Ludwig kits. While some anniversary specials are limited to a strict number of pieces, the Heirloom Black Brass snare is set to be in production for the whole of 2019.

Two versions of the drum are available – 14"x5½" and 14"x7". Rhythm was sent the shallower of the pair. As its name might suggest, the snare is built with a brass shell – 1mm thick – which is rolled and welded (though finding evidence of the weld inside the shell proved difficult). Bearing edges are folded over at 45 degrees while generous snare beds have been scalloped out snareside. The brass shell is finished with a black nickel coating which is then brushed rather than polished for a matt rendering. Further visual details – embossed silhouettes of the famous Keystone badge and Ludwig's logo – are found in the central portion of the shell.

Bold as Brass

Ten double-ended brass Imperial lugs are fitted to the drum, as are brass die-cast hoops. Brass versions of Ludwig's modern-retro P88 throw off and P35 butt end complete the brass theme, with the conventional tension rods and snare wires making up the rest of the shell hardware. Taiwanese Remo/Ludwig heads (coated batter and clear snareside) top and tail the snare, while a heavy-duty carry bag comes as standard. All that metal requires a sturdy stand to support it and this one is a belter.

Brass makes for sweet-sounding drums that ooze warmth and brightness and this drum has ample reserves of both qualities. Hit with a 5B, it augments these tonal niceties with eye-popping power. Rimshots are akin to being punched by a doorman wearing a bejewelled Cartier knuckleduster. In calmer hands, the subtlest of touches brings an appropriate response – right into the edges – while brushes are catered for with graceful ease. Some birthday present!

CONTACT
www.ludwig-drums.com

Verdict

While it's a fitting celebration of Ludwig's 110 year drum making heritage, at this price it's destined for trophy status rather than as an everyday drum.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

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Tama Superstar Classic Maple

Tama's re-released Superstar Classic gets an upgrade

Words: **Tom Bradley**

PRICE £1079

Since the release of the revamped Superstar Classic last year, Tama has added a seven-piece configuration to its all-maple range, available in a selection of exclusive new finishes. This monster setup presents an affordable opportunity to the budding rockstar for their first proper kit, or even a more budget-friendly alternative for the seasoned player.

The Options

The 7-piece shell pack (as reviewed) comprises a 22"x16" bass drum, 8"x6", 10"x7" and 12"x8" rack toms, 14"x12" and 16"x14" floor toms and a 14"x6½" snare. Supplied hardware includes a double tom holder (Omnisphere) for the drilled bass drum and single tom attachment clamp for mounting the 8" tom. The Superstar Classic Maple is still available in a host of configurations which includes two 5-piece options; 10"x8", 12"x9", 16"x14", 22"x18" and 14"x6½"; or a more fusion-friendly 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14", 20"x16" and 14"x5" – the asking price for both of which is £799.

A smaller 4-piece jazz configuration – 12"x8", 14"x14", 18"x14" and 14"x5" – is available in a multitude of finishes, starting at £579.

"THE BUILD QUALITY IS GENERALLY EXCELLENT AND THE ATTENTION TO DETAIL THAT WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT FROM TAMA IS STILL EVIDENT, DESPITE THE LOWER PRICE BRACKET."

When the new Superstar Classic hit the UK last year, the three finishes available were Blue Lacquer Burst, Coffee Fade and Tangerine Lacquer Burst. The series now boasts three new Exotic Lacquer finishes, exclusive to the 7-piece configuration. These are Garnet Burst Lacebark Pine, Java Burst Lacebark Pine (as reviewed) and Sapphire Burst Lacebark Pine.

If you're a fan of a natural wood finish then these shells shouldn't disappoint. The bold woodgrain of our review kit is enhanced by the dark brown and black shades of the Java Burst Lacebark Pine satin lacquer finish.

Shell Design

The Chinese made shells are 100% maple which is impressive given the price point, although Tama has found methods of keeping the cost down elsewhere. This is achieved in part by producing thin shells – 6ply (5mm) construction for the toms and snare, and 8ply (7mm) for the bass drum (with no reinforcement rings). Also assisting in this department are the hollow, '70s inspired low-mass lugs of which 8 can be found on the smallest tom-tom, 12 on the 12" and 14" toms and 16 on the bass drum and largest tom. The 14"x 6½" snare drum uses six of the original style dual Superstar lugs.

TAMA
TAMA
TAMA
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Tama does suggest, in reference to its low-mass lugs, that by reducing the surface area occupied on the shell, there is less hindrance which results in more overall resonance. In another nod towards Tama's history, each Superstar Classic shell proudly exhibits an original 'T' logo badge which also houses the inbuilt air vents.

The build quality is generally excellent and the attention to detail that we have come to expect from Tama is still evident, despite the lower price bracket.

Hardware

The bass drum is drilled to allow for the 10" and 12" toms to be mounted using the omni-ball dual tom holder – also found on Tama's Imperialstar kit.

Each rack tom uses the Star-Mount suspension system which while connecting to four of the drum's tension rods, runs halfway around its circumference .The large mounting brackets mean that the toms can't be positioned right next to each other but their straight edges allow them to sit neatly side-by-side.

The Sound

The clear Powercraft II heads are fitted top and bottom and serve as an adequate starting point to get the kit up and running. The heads produce a rapid attack and lack somewhat in sustain. The combination of factory heads and fewer lugs on some of the drums makes initially tuning the kit a little trickier than anticipated.

The resonant head of the bass drum comes pre-ported which makes it nice and easy to pack in some dampening without removing the head. The five tom-toms make for hours of fun, whipping out the biggest fills we can muster and attempting our best Nicko McBrain impressions. The 8" tom isn't the most responsive and doesn't fully engage the resonant head unless really laid into. Rim shots draw out its maximum tone which works fantastically well in a Latin setting. Moving through the toms, they sound wonderfully full considering the initial issues we encountered with the heads. The tones are well balanced and the drums become increasingly more resonant as we play down the kit. The 14" and 16" floor toms offer a full and rounded tone, if not a little short in decay. The speed of the toms works well in partnership with a double bass pedal and some Mike Portnoy-style linear fills.

Despite its basic looks in terms of hardware, the supplied 14"x6½" snare drum is responsive and musical with a warmth that shines through at medium to high tunings. The extra depth (compared with the standard 5½") affords it a fuller and broader tone, also making it more versatile. Tuned up to a tight crack the drum is punchy and lively with warm overtones. With a little dampening, it offers a more controlled attack which would be as happy in rock styles as funk or fusion. Tuned up tighter it does become stifled, particularly with the snare wires off. With the snares on though, the drum is dynamic and responds quickly.

"THE BOLD WOODGRAIN OF OUR REVIEW KIT IS ENHANCED BY THE DARK BROWN AND BLACK SHADES OF THE JAVA BURST LACEBARK PINE SATIN LACQUER FINISH."

CONTACT
www.tama.com

They Say:

SIMEON READ
Percussion product specialist – Headstock

What kind of player do you see the Superstar Classic being aimed at?
"The Superstar Classic is aimed at players of any level and musical style. We've had people use it from pop performances to metal gigs. Maple is a very versatile wood, which makes it a good choice for the current climate. We believe that the Superstar can work no matter what style."

How would you describe the tonal characteristics of the Superstar Classic?
"For Tama, every drum kit that's produced has one focus from the beginning, the sound. Built in the same factory as our Starclassic Maple range, we wanted to be able to emulate that kit at a different price point. The Superstar Classic is a powerful yet controlled sound – we carefully selected maple wood that would have the right resonance and control."

With the NAMM show fast approaching, can you tell us what's coming from Tama?
"We will have some great new finishes through all the ranges and also be focusing on some smaller kits configurations all the way up to the STAR range. The usual new bits of hardware and snares will be on show, but you'll have to wait and see in January."

Verdict

The Superstar Classic represents a sound investment for those looking for an all-maple kit on a budget. The epic tom configuration of our review model makes for a killer rock and metal setup.

Rhythm Rating

7/10

1 2

3

1. The Star-Mount system provides support at four points on the batter-side hoop and is designed to increase shell resonance.

2. The bass drum hoop features a matching finish on the outer layer while the inside shows off its natural maple.

3. The Omnisphere dual tom mount allows secure positioning of the 10” and 12” toms.

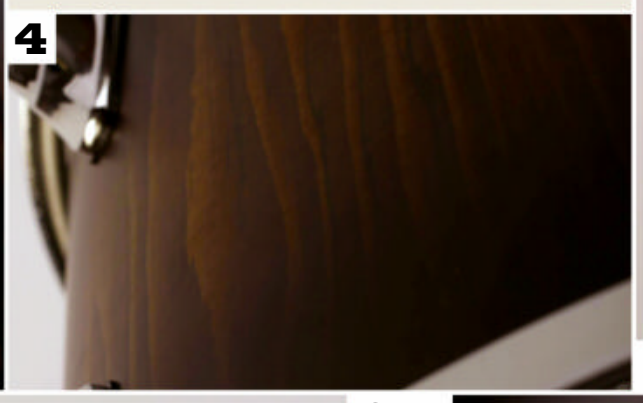
4. The Java Burst Lacebark Pine is one of three new Exotic Lacquer finishes for the Superstar Classic.

5. The Superstar Classic is supplied with Powercraft II heads top and bottom.

6. Old school low-mass lugs are designed to further increase shell resonance.

7. Each Superstar Classic shell proudly exhibits an original T-shape Tama logo.

4



5

6 7

1. The 2000 watt speaker features a 12" woofer and a high frequency compression driver.

2. The amp is finished in plain black for a uniform aesthetic.

3. Combi inputs allow two jack or XLRs with individual volume control and a basic EQ contour.

4. The cabinet can be tilted in both vertical and horizontal positions for a more convenient listening angle.

Alesis Strike Amp 12

Dedicated e-drum monitoring for Alesis' flagship range

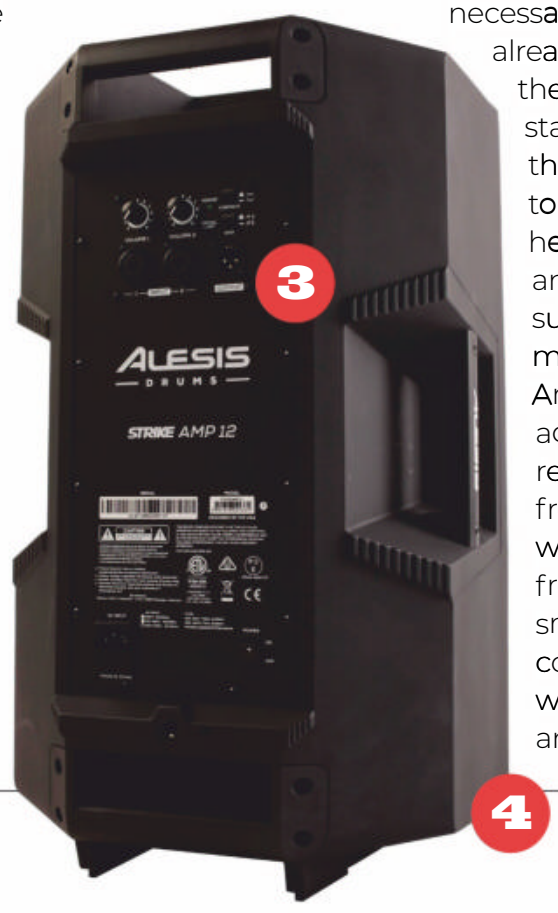
Words: **Tom Bradley**

PRICE: £299.99

The Alesis Strike range has recently expanded from the flagship Strike and Strike Pro e-kits to now include the impressive Strike MultiPad, and the brand-new Strike Amp 12. Following on from its former TransActive range, Alesis' latest offering is currently the company's only dedicated drum monitoring system.

Small But Mighty

This powerful and compact 2000-watt active monitor features a 12" woofer speaker and a high-frequency compression driver. Simple in design, the plain black cabinet can be positioned both vertically and horizontally, while its square shape allows it to be tilted back to a more convenient listening angle. Much like a standard PA speaker, the Strike Amp also allows for pole mounting. Powered using a removable kettle (IEC) lead, the Strike Amp features two combi-inputs (¼ jack and XLR), each with an individual volume control knob. Two small buttons allow for basic EQ contouring (boosting high and low frequencies +3db) or reduction of any unwanted ground noise, while green and red LEDs display the power status and input gain level respectively.



The Lowdown

In practice, we're pleased to report that the Strike Amp 12 does, in fact, pack a pretty mean punch. Rigged up with our electronic kit we can not only feel some serious air moving from the speaker cone but with low bass and tom notes the amp is actually squirming its way across the shiny studio floor. Overall frequency response is fair and the EQ contour is effective although not particularly necessary – with the low-end already feeling at the limit of the 12" speaker. At higher stage-level volumes the speaker does start to distort under the heavy kick drum sample and, in particular, deep sub-drops. For home monitoring, the Strike Amp is more than adequate and faithfully reproduces the sounds from our drum module with an impressive frequency response. Its small footprint allows convenient positioning within an e-kit setup and goes a long way

to enhancing the playing experience. The only snag here is that using just one speaker will produce a mono signal. There's the option then, in that case, for one unit on each side for a monster monitor setup which also doubles as a functioning PA system.

CONTACT
www.alesis.com

Verdict

A reasonably lightweight and compact speaker, the Strike Amp 12 is powerful and simple in design. As a home e-kit monitor, it'll be sure to get your trousers flapping.

Rhythm Rating

6/10

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Beats working

Every drummer needs Rhythm. Exclusive lessons from our expert team...

Welcome, to the new Rhythm magazine education section in which we hope you'll find something for drummers of levels and persuasions. So what's in it you ask? We begin with a familiar trio of Rhythm tutors: Colin Woolway, Erik Stams and myself, Pete Riley, and in our respective 'Getting Started', 'Creative Concepts' and 'Technical Difficulties' lessons we'll each be covering the same subject (this issue it's 3 over 2 polyrhythms) but exploring it from three different perspectives.

Next is Jason Bowld's 'Four-Piece Fills' which (rather unsurprisingly given the title!) looks at developing fill vocabulary for a classic 4-piece set-up.

In 'Percussion Toolkit' percussion guru Pete Lockett focuses on developing a degree of mastery with a variety of percussion instruments which would prove an asset to any drummer's rhythmic arsenal. He kicks things off with the cajon.

'So, You Want To Play Hybrid...' sees Tom Bradley help to demystify the increasingly popular world of hybrid drumming and integrating electronics into an acoustic set-up.

'A drum lesson without picking up the sticks' is the objective for Mike Sturgis's lesson which focuses on the more cerebral aspects of playing the drums.

And finally, we have our two play-along tracks in which the key drum parts are broken down and demonstrated before being performed all the way through. You're then free to do the same with the 'minus drums' version backing tracks.

We really hope you enjoy the material presented here every issue and that it proves to be a go-to resource for helping to make you the best drummer you can be.

Beats Working Editor

Introducing our expert tutors (and their first-ever drum kit)...

PETE RILEY

In his 35 years of playing Pete has recorded and toured with a wide range of artists from Guthrie Govan to Keith Emerson (ELP). He's also been active in the world of education for many years, started writing for Rhythm in '93, has been teaching at ACM for some 21 years and more recently at WaterBear in Brighton.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"...Was my Christmas present, aged 15. It was a 5-piece Maxwin by Pearl costing £100. I'm confident it sounded pretty awful, mostly down to my tuning and playing, but it sounded great to me."

ERIK STAMS

Born and raised in NYC, Erik has over 20 years of performing, recording, television, film and teaching experience. He's performed and recorded with artists including Jamie Lawson, Zervas and Pepper, Butch Thomas, Jon Langford, The Glyndebourne Touring Opera, and The Darling Buds. He is head of drums at BIMM London.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"First I had a Premier snare and a set of Zildjian hi-hats. But at 18, I got a decent kit; a Blonde Maple Ludwig kit, like John Bonham's. It had 13" & 14" power toms, 16" & 18" floor toms and a 22" kick drum. I played that kit for many years. It was big, loud and I loved it.

JASON BOWLD

Jase has been the drummer for Welsh rock/metal titans Bullet for my Valentine since 2015. He began drumming aged 12 and turned professional at 21. He joined UK industrial legends Pitchshifter from 1999 to 2007, during which time his session drumming career took shape. He's played with Killing Joke, Pop Will Eat Itself, Fightstar, and even Bill Bailey.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

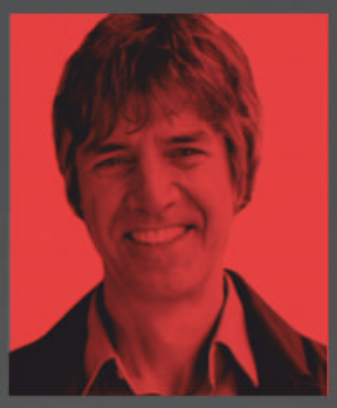
"My first kit was a Pearl Maxwin – lucky as I'm a Pearl endorsee! I was determined to make it sound like Dave Lombardo's drums off *South of Heaven* (Slayer). In my head I was in Slayer at the age of 12."

PETE LOCKETT

Pete is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists on the planet and has played a dizzying range of instruments with artists including Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Michael Nyman, and the Pet Shop Boys; and on a plethora of Hollywood films. He continues to tour worldwide as a soloist, collaborator and educator.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"My first 'proper' kit was an old Rogers Londoner kit from the '70s. A great beast but a bit of a challenge for a young lad from Pompey docks like me!"



MIKE STURGIS

A 15-year veteran of writing for Rhythm magazine, Mike Sturgis has appeared live and on record with artists including A-ha, Steve Winwood, Jack Bruce, David Bowie, Elton John, Tom Jones, Bob James, Asia, Beverly Knight and many more. He plays with Redtenbacher's Funkestra and The Staks and is head of education for DIME Online.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"The first drum kit I ever played was an old Ludwig belonging to my uncle that had single-headed toms. It was right out of the early '70s – what a sound, I was hooked!"

COLIN WOOLWAY

Colin has been playing and teaching drums professionally since 1976. He has done every kind of gig including eight years with rock icon Suzi Quatro. He is the founder of the Drumsense teaching programme and has written for Rhythm for over 20 years! Colin teaches at studios in Twickenham, The Brit School, and ELAM.

MY FIRST DRUM KIT

"An old 4-piece mash-up of a Premier Olympic snare and floor tom and Ajax bass and 12" mounted tom. Zyn hi-hats, and an Ajax 16" cymbal mounted on the bass drum along with the tom, all precariously balanced as the bass drum only had one spur!"

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For the featured tuition videos go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Getting Started

Perfect the polyrhythm and you'll have the basis for some of drumming's coolest beats, says **Colin Woolway**

Hello and welcome to the first of my many drum lessons for the newly relaunched Rhythm magazine. It's great to be back!

This issue we are going to be looking at 3 over 2. In other words, that's the art of playing three notes with one limb while playing two notes with another in the same time-space.

For some of you, as it was for me many years ago, this may be your first experience of a polyrhythm. For others, it may just be putting a name to something that you're already doing without actually being aware of it!

It's thought that within this rhythm lies the basis of the jazz beat. There's a strong case for jazz's African origins and the polyrhythmic tradition is certainly stronger in that continent than in European folk music. So have a go and see what you think.

For Colin's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Heads up

Practice Challenge

A great exercise in dynamics is to treat your limbs like faders on a mixing desk. So let's take our 3 over 2 and play on the floor tom and snare. Make your left hand loud and your right hand quiet for 2 bars, then swap vice versa for 2 bars, and repeat!

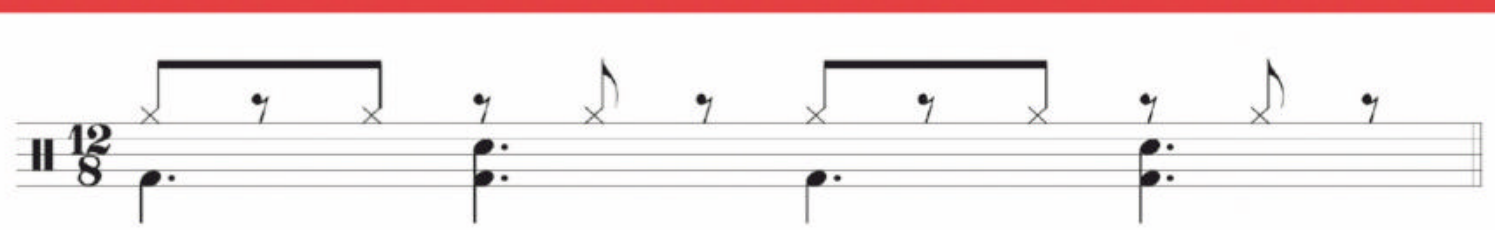
1

The right hand is shown on the line above the left hand. Count to 6, co-ordinating your hands with your counting, remembering to leave spaces on counts 2 and 6.

2

Play the right hand on the ride cymbal, left hand on the snare. Try to get a feel for the two different 'sides', 3 beats on one side, 2 on the other.

3



Let's turn the exercise into a groove! Here's a 12/8 rhythm, playing 3 over 2 twice in one bar, in other words, '6 over 4'. To get started, play the 3 over 2 rhythm with the bass drum playing the 2, then add the snare.

Creative Concepts

Three into two will go, if you follow **Erik Stams**' expert advice

For Erik's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

This month we'll be exploring the polyrhythmic ratio of three-against-two. Think of it as three evenly spaced notes in the same time as two.

The phrase 'three-against-two' implies that one subdivision is to be played against another. In this case, we'll designate the two side of the polyrhythm as the pulse and play the three side against it. Example 1 shows accented 8th-note triplets over a quarter-note pulse. The accents create a 3:2 polyrhythm against the stepped hi-hat. Removing the unaccented notes isolates the polyrhythmic phrase (Ex. 2). This rhythmic cell can be executed using any two voices of the drum kit.

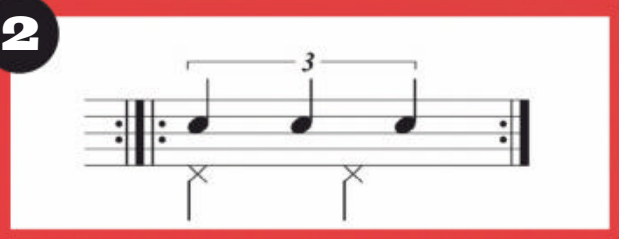
Example 3 shows accented 8th-note triplets on the hi-hat against a simple kick and snare pattern, creating a polyrhythmic groove. The hi-hat hat notes can be played using alternating sticking (RLRL) or with one hand. Example 4 illustrates the same concept, but with the unaccented notes removed. In Example 5 the polyrhythm is re-orchestrated. The hi-hat accents form the two side of the polyrhythm while the three side is played on the bass drum, similar to Jeff Porcaro's groove on 'Hold the Line', by Toto. In Example 6 the bass drum notes are played against a shuffle in the right hand. Make the bass drum notes accurately fit the shuffle ostinato. Start the accent pattern on the offbeat to create a more syncopated version (Ex. 7 and 8).

Play a backbeat on beat three to create a half-time feel (Ex. 9). Example 10 shows the polyrhythm orchestrated between ride cymbal and stepped hi-hat, a useful and malleable rhythmic device. Explore other orchestrations and bass drum placements. Practice slowly with a metronome while counting out loud.

1

Accented eighth-note triplets against stepped hi-hat.

2

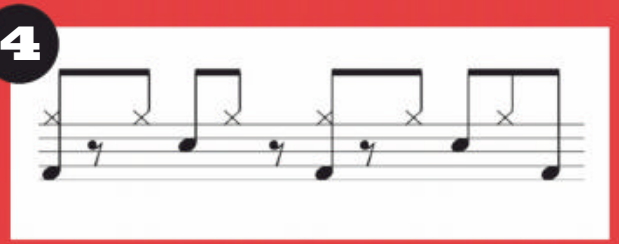


Remove the unaccented notes to isolate the polyrhythmic cell.

3

Accented hi-hat against simple kick and snare pattern.

4



Shuffle pattern on the hi-hat.

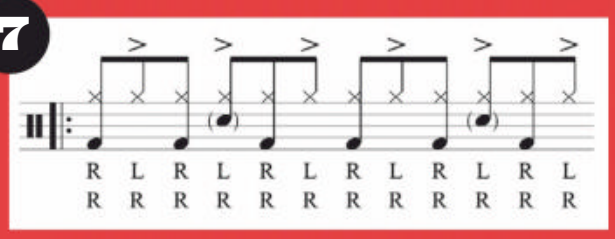
5

Hi-hat accents on the downbeats, bass drum plays the '3' side of the polyrhythm.

6

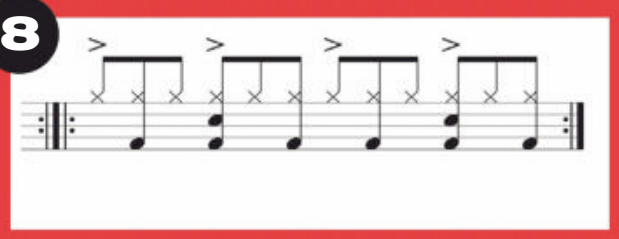
Bass drum against hi-hat shuffle.

7



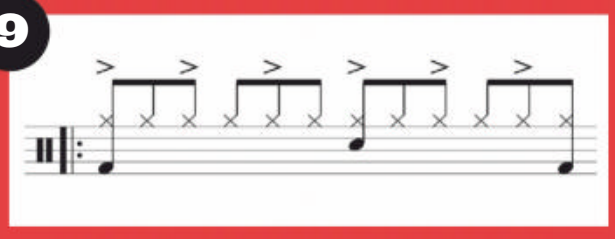
Displaced accents on the hi-hat.

8



Displaced polyrhythm on the bass drum.

9



Half-time feel.

10

Ride cymbal over stepped hi-hat.

Heads up

Polyrhythm

Two or more independent rhythms sounded simultaneously, usually represented as one note value against another.

Technical Difficulties

Play a 3 over 2 polyrhythm as a foot ostinato with **Pete Riley**'s help

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

In this lesson we're exploring a foot ostinato that features a 3 over 2 polyrhythm. Examples 1 and 2 begin by moving the basic polyrhythm from the hands to the feet, while in Example 3 the right hand becomes a shuffle rhythm and this, when moved to the feet, becomes our foot ostinato.

The next challenge is to develop some independence with the hands and we begin in Example 5 with single-stroke eighth-note triplets while Example 6 features an Afro-Cuban 6/8 or Bembe pattern.

Our final two examples push the polyrhythmic theme a little further to imply a different time feel. We begin with Example 6 where the right hand is playing quarter note triplets, accenting every other note. We then add a backbeat to every other accent which creates a two-bar pattern that implies a slower time feel.

We finish with what is exactly the same pattern as we saw in Example 7, only this time playing it from the other perspective. So now the bass drum part of our ostinato sounds like a shuffle rhythm moving through the 16th notes.

Heads up

An ostinato is a repeated phrase or rhythm that runs through a piece of music, such as the snare drum part in Ravel's 'Bolero'. They often appear in different aspects of drumming such as the samba foot pattern to the jazz ride cymbal rhythm.

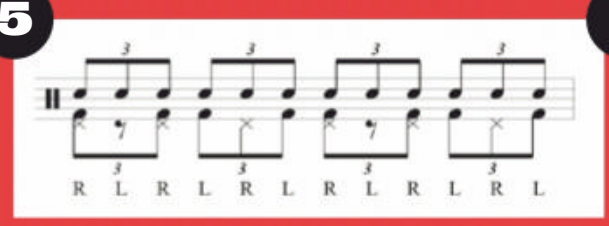
1

2

3

4

5



6

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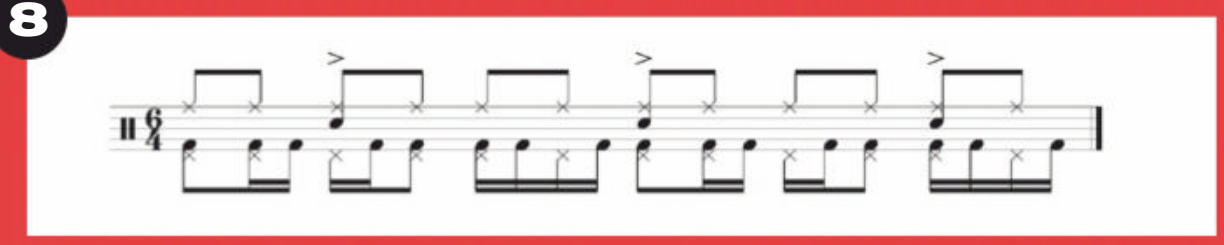


rockschool®

Four-Piece-Fills

Play ferocious fills by varying your technique, says **Jason Bowld**

For Jason's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Welcome to Four-Piece-Fills. As the name suggests, this will encompass big, creative fills played on a small kit setup and this month we will get cracking with some dynamic triplet fills. The idea is to use creative movements on the kit and involve different sticking ideas such as six-stroke rolls and singles to squeeze every last drop of drum out of that four-piece set up!

Example 1 is set up with a funky James Brown-style groove played for three bars that leads into the first fill played in bar four. Played in 16th-note triplets, we start with a six-stroke roll on the snare and move around the toms and back to the snare from the floor tom. This 'rotation' movement continues for the duration of the bar.

Example 2 continues the funky groove theme and the fill in bar four played with no-nonsense singles with just a hint of John Bonham.

Finally, a much more digestible fill is shown in Example 3. Powerful four-stroke ruffs are played with some interplay with the right foot to create a fill with space.

Heads up

Six-stroke roll into singles

Practising six-stroke rolls into 16th-note triplet singles is a great way to develop transitions between different sticking patterns and will encourage you to use rudimentary applications more in your own playing.

1 The accents played on the snare are key to making the fill in bar four sound musical. I would suggest playing these on rim shots to really differentiate between the non-accented notes for a strong sounding fill.

2 The leading hand in the fill swaps around every beat and a half to make this a great ambidextrous exercise too. Essentially, what you end up with is a group of nine that you can cycle to develop this further.

3 A simpler fill here – but don't forget, simpler can also mean more accessible! The right double is the friction point, played on the right foot during beat two. When practising slowly, focus on the transition to beat three to ensure a smooth sound.

Percussion Toolbox

A wooden box you sit on and hit, the cajon looks simple but it needs a deft touch says **Pete Lockett**

The cajon is one of my main go-to instruments on sessions. It has a dynamic tonal range that lends itself comfortably to many different musical genres, including outside of its traditional homelands of Peru and Spain. Most recently it has become popularised worldwide and can be found in pop, jazz, funk and world music across the planet.

The instrument looks deceptively simple. It's a basic wooden box around 20" which has a hole cut out in the back to allow the bass tones to resonate. A sobering history of the cajon (which is Spanish for "box", "crate" or "drawer") reveals how it was originally developed from wooden tea chests when drums were outlawed among displaced slaves in the Americas. It shows that humanity's creative spirit and musical nature can never be completely crushed or defeated.

In modern times, the instrument has been incredibly popular from the nineties until now.

In these first couple of articles, I will show the fundamentals of getting started on the cajon. I'll cover the basic playing position, posture, strokes and pattern combinations. This should be enough to get you to a crossroads where you can see the true potential of the instrument for yourself. One of the goals of this series is to introduce these instruments to drum set players, not just percussionists.

As a drum set player, if you can turn up to the studio and have a few more things to offer then it stands you in a much stronger position to get called back. Basic percussion such as cajon, bongos, shakers etc. can be a positive plus-point in a very competitive market for musicians. You don't need to go on and become a master in all these fields. Having a basic vocabulary though, is achievable.

PLAYING POSITION

Not surprisingly, we sit on the cajon. Some companies have small cushions that make this a tad more comfortable. It is important to keep a relaxed but upright posture with the arms coming down so that the hands come over the upper face of the drum. Do not sit too far forward so that your legs get in the way when striking the drum.

THE MAIN TONES

There are three main tones on cajon. The **bass tone** is made when you strike the face of the instrument with your palm. The **touch tone** is created with your fingertips on the upper corners of the cajon. Finally, the **slap tone** is probably the most difficult to master. Here's how you play all three.

Image: Panos Vassilopoulos

BASS TONE

This is played with the flat underside of the hand. The fingers can be held together or very slightly apart. The hand is relaxed and comes down with the palm flat onto the front surface of the cajon. The fingers are bent back very slightly and do not strike the surface. The main impact is with the centre of the palm of the hand. It stays there after impact for a short time. Getting the bass tone from the drum will require experimentation. Some drums have the best bass tone nearer the centre while others are out further towards the edge. Try moving your hand out from the centre towards the edge to see where the best bass tone is. Normally, the best place is with the wrist a couple of inches in from the top edge. Many of the bass tones will be performed with our dominant hand, although we do need to develop this with both hands.

In this pic (right), we see where the hand strikes the drum for the bass tone.

BASS PALM

In the picture below, we see the area of the underside of the hand that strikes the drum. The fingertips do not touch. See the area marked with the overlaid shadow.

TOUCH TONE

This is played with the fingertips of either hand up near the upper corners of the drum. These strokes are normally played subtly and quietly. See the pic below that shows where the touch tone is played.

SLAP TONE

Let's add in our third tone. The slap stroke takes a little time to master. To play it, you cup the hand and 'grab' the drum sharply. After you have struck the drum, you leave the fingertips on the surface and grab slightly for a millisecond, like you were pulling some string in towards yourself. The hand is not too far into the playing surface and is roughly where it is for the touch stroke. It is not a stroke that necessarily needs to be articulated loudly. One can also play an 'open' slap tone where the fingers do not remain on the surface after impact.

Examples

Let's start with some even 16th notes using the touch tone. Not too loud and with a simple RLRL hand configuration.

1

Now, let's try the same with the bass tone. Notice how the hand comes further into the drum than with the touch tone. Focus on an even tone between the two hands.

2

Next we will combine our first pattern with some additional bass tones every four notes.

3

Example four introduces the slap into the mix.

4

From example five onwards we start to mix our three tones into some 'back beat' / 'drum set' style 16ths grooves.

5

6

7

There is a lot to discover on this amazing instrument. We have started out with some hybrid, non-traditional grooves to get you playing as quickly as possible. Next time we will start to expand and develop on this concept.

So, You Want to Play Hybrid?

Power up your playing and mix electronics with your acoustic kit says **Tom Bradley**

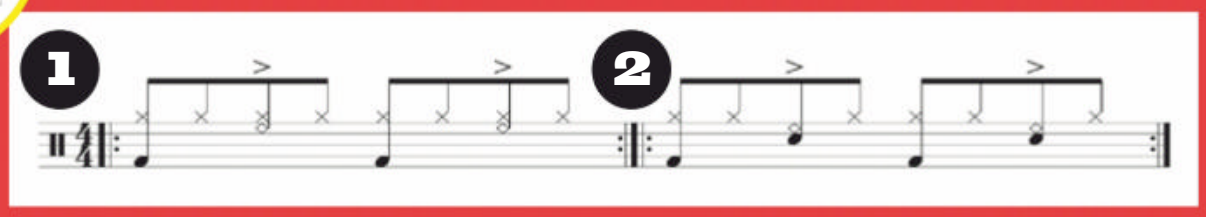
In this first session we'll be using an electronic drum pad and sound module to incorporate a handclap sample into a selection of grooves. All you need to get started is a pad, module, jack cable and a pair of headphones or a speaker. For this first session, any e-drum module will do the job so see what you can get your hands on.

We'll start with a straightforward groove as a comfortable way of introducing the electronics and then take things up a notch by introducing ghost notes and snare displacement. Check out the accompanying video lesson for a more in-depth look at the tech setup.

Tech Talk

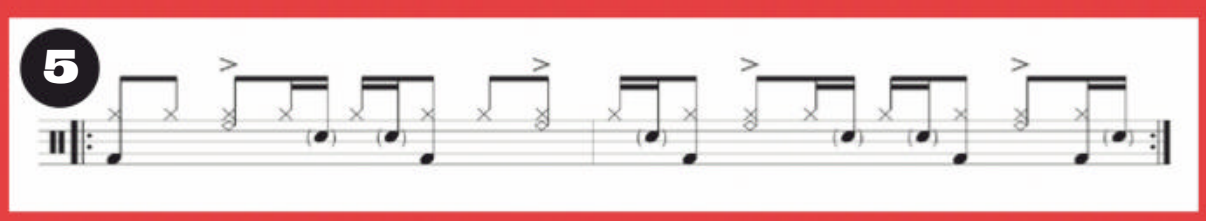
Sound Module:
This is the computing power behind any electronic drum setup. The module can be programmed to play any sound, or 'sample' when a pad is struck.

Drum Pad:
Usually a rubber or mesh playing surface that sends a signal to the module when played. These can be incorporated anywhere into your existing setup.



First, the left hand will play the handclap on beats 2 & 4 instead of the snare drum. Then we'll introduce the snare in unison using the right hand, for a layered backbeat.

These follow the same format as the previous examples, only now we're adding ghost notes on the snare drum.



This time one of the snare accents in the first bar has been displaced to the '&' for more of a funky flavour.

Beatsworking

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Finding Your Musical Identity

How do you define your own musical identity when inspiration is always just a click away? Mike Sturgis says the answer lies within every drummer...

This is going to show my age, but I remember a time when as a very young boy learning to play the drums, one of my biggest treats was being allowed to stay up late and watch Buddy Rich on *The Johnny Carson Show*. It was so exciting and inspirational to get a glimpse of one of my idols. This was ramped up even further on those few occasions when I had the joy of seeing Buddy and his band live – truly a life-changing experience!

We now live in amazing times. Through the magic of the internet, we can access almost any information we want, whenever we want. In addition to streaming our favourite music or watching an inspirational performance on YouTube or elsewhere, we can also search for specific instructional content (much of it by iconic drummers) designed to help us take our playing to the next level. The pool of online content to be explored is like outer space; vast, endless and getting bigger every day.

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR OWN MUSICAL **IDENTITY** IS ABOUT LOOKING AT YOURSELF, EMBRACING WHO YOU ARE, AND KNOWING THAT IT'S **SOMETHING TO BE CELEBRATED.**"

While there are obvious benefits to having such quick and easy access to music and related content, there may also be some potential concerns or problems. Ironically, our 24-7 access to unlimited content (even if it is used for inspiration and learning) has the potential to fill us with a sense of unease. How do we begin the daunting task of curating this content to align with our creative and professional ambitions? Because it is so readily available, does content (however amazing) become so normalised that it loses its magic and ceases to inspire us in the same way? And finally, does the enormity of the information available have the potential to make you feel that you might be jumping from one topic to the next without fully absorbing anything?

These are difficult questions to answer and any response is purely subjective. However, as we recognise the potential problems that information overload can create, it's possible that we might obtain the most success, satisfaction and clarity from our consumption and study of music when we have decided what our musical identity is or will be.

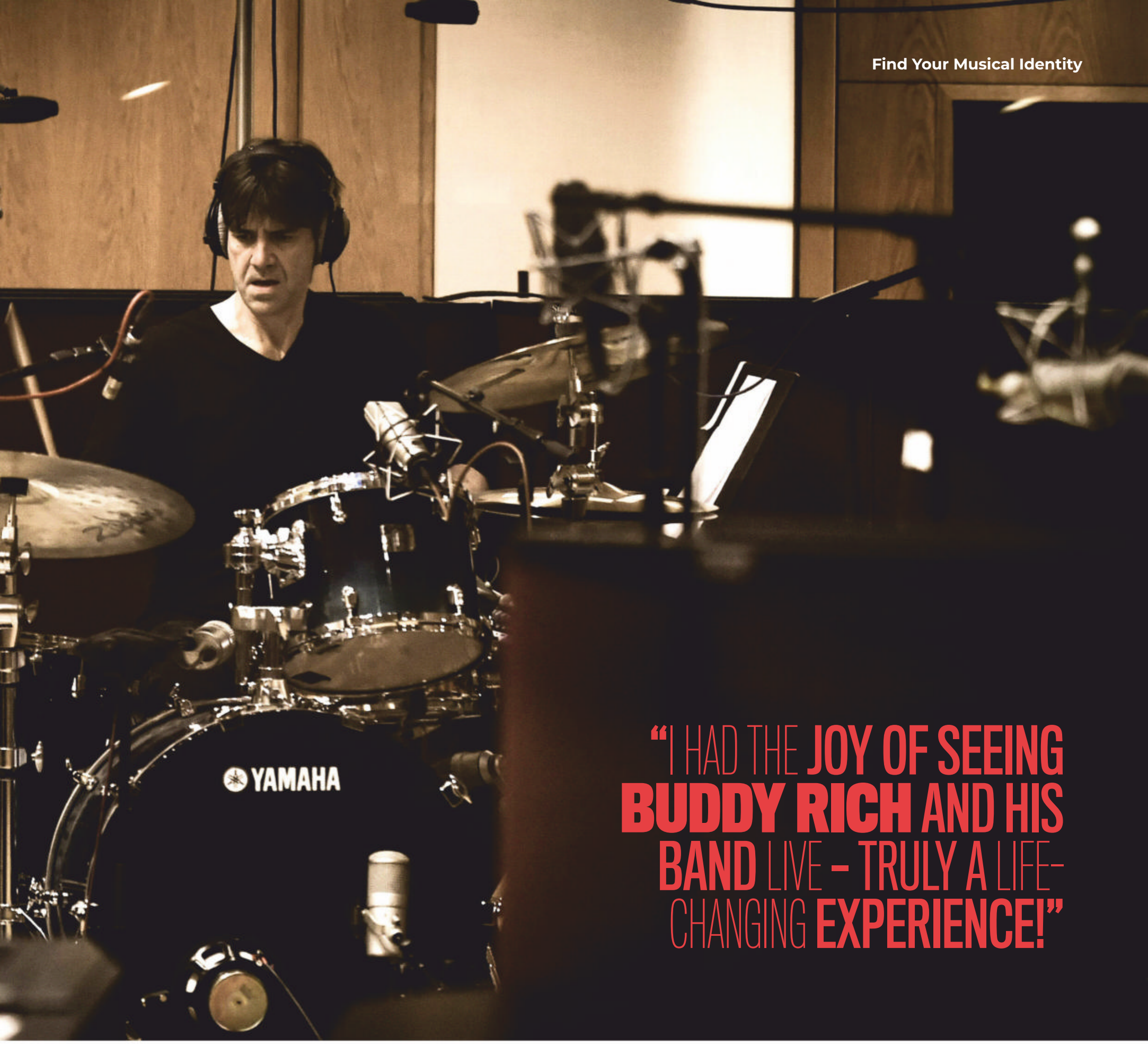
Defining musical identity

While our quest to define our musical identity can help us to be more focused in our consumption of content, we also want to avoid being too simplistic or reductionist in our judgments. For many of us, our 'self-concept' is constantly changing as we grow older, depending on where we live, the people we interact with, our connection and identification with the zeitgeist of our times (or other times) and many other factors. Similarly, our musical tastes evolve. What we are interested in and passionate about today may not be the same as it was 10 years ago. Things always change and we do not live indefinitely in creative stasis.

And yet, despite all of these considerations, we can usually see clear patterns emerge over time regarding how we engage with the creation, performance, listening to and appreciation of music. These observations can help us (and others) to put some sort of label on the totality of our musical expression. For example, if we come back to the force of nature that was Buddy Rich, we know that his virtuosity was predominantly contextualised into the genre of jazz. Therefore, in addition to Buddy being one of the greatest drummers of all time, he is also (rightly or wrongly) labelled as a 'jazz drummer'. And while there are limitations to this label and it doesn't fully encompass his prodigious skills and achievements, it is not without merit or substance. Additionally, it conforms to a collective opinion.

Freedom in knowing

Therefore, if we can make an assessment of our own musical identity (which should be based not only on our convictions but in consultation with those who know us) and embrace this, it follows that we may be far more able to distil our focus



"I HAD THE **JOY OF SEEING BUDDY RICH** AND HIS **BAND** LIVE – TRULY A LIFE-CHANGING **EXPERIENCE!"**

Image: Hulton Deutsch/Getty Images

towards music that can enhance our existing skills and ambitions. We can be more laser-focused towards the type of content that will keep us inspired and not overwhelmed. Admittedly, there is a tension here between the potential benefits we've just mentioned and closing yourself off unnecessarily to new ideas and influences. Regarding the latter, we should avoid becoming blinkered in our views and limiting our chances to explore new concepts that may enhance our musical identity. For example, Omar Hakim may not be thought of (or think of himself) as a 'reggae drummer' in the same way as Carlton Barrett, who was an iconic drummer within the genre. However, Omar embraces reggae with his playing in ways that are congruent with his complex and multi-faceted musical identity, producing a stylised approach that is a wonderful element of his identifiable sound.

Determining your musical identity

Unless you are an extremely rare human being (e.g. Vinnie Colaiuta), you will eventually specialise to some extent in your creative and professional musical activities. Just like the medical profession, it's impossible to learn it all. Depending on the demands of a person's health, an entire team of practitioners may be involved; nutritionists, oncologists, endocrinologists, surgeons, etc. All of these practitioners are crucial to restoring wellness to their patients, and therefore none can be ranked more highly than the other in their skills or knowledge.

The development of your own musical identity is about looking at yourself honestly, embracing who you are, and knowing that it's something to be celebrated. While not an exhaustive list, here are some things you might do or like to consider:

- Pay close attention to your own 'inner compass' with regards to your musical interests, i.e. what do you gravitate towards with regards to listening, performing or creating?
- Once you've determined the above, do a 'deep-dive' on the things that interest you. For example, absorb an entire album, not just individual tracks – see how this resonates with your musical universe.
- Consult with your peers/colleagues/family/friends – what do they think you are characterised by?
- What instruments do you own? How do you set up when you perform?
- If you're looking for musical inspiration, where do you go?

Conclusion

Without forgetting some of the potential risks, I believe a thoughtful attempt at defining our musical identity has the potential to make us more comfortable with who we are as musicians and can increase our enjoyment and success. Though it might seem an esoteric concept, be a patient observer of your inner life and where it leads you in your musical journey. Everyone's path is different; there are no absolutes, and comparisons are usually not helpful. We all have something of value to offer to the world if we remember that music is a gift that enriches the soul and not an athletic competition!

FINDING YOUR OWN VOICE

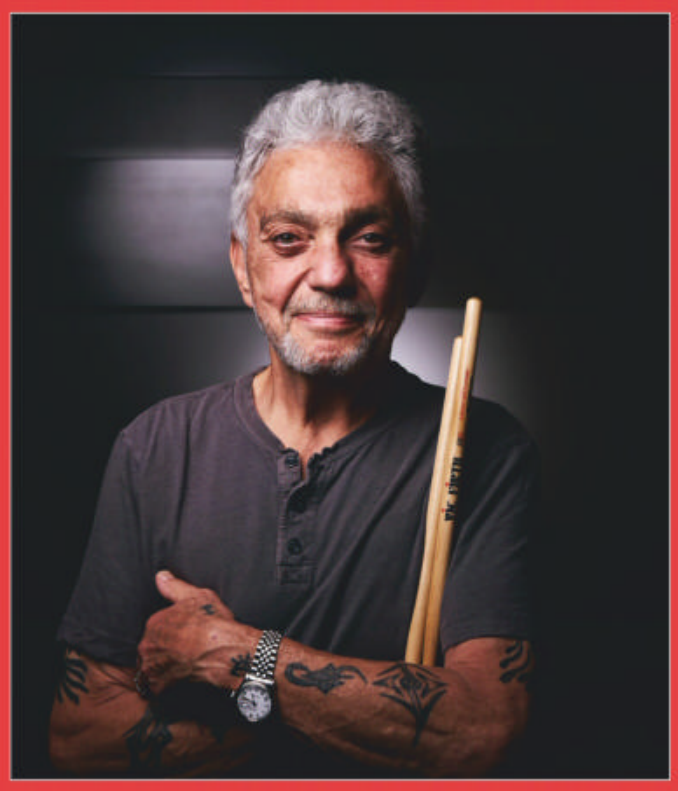
DENNIS CHAMBERS

"It's all very well using YouTube to figure out what you like about a certain drummer – what those sounds are, what the phrasing is – but then you have to decide how you are going to approach that same idea yourself. You need to do something different with it, make it your own – you can't just copy it verbatim – and then suddenly you'll find you are playing it in your way. And if you do that for a long period of time, you will start developing your own style, and your own sound.

"What makes a drummer a drummer, is how different they are from everyone else – there is only ever going to be one Steve Gadd! When you go back and listen to the history of drummers, they all sound different, and you learn that they all sound different because they have a different feel. That's their DNA right there – you know it's them as soon as you hear them – and that's what every drummer should strive for."

STEVE GADD

"Go out and find what resonates, and speaks to you as a drummer. Not everyone is going to like the same thing, and we will naturally gravitate to what we love, and what feels natural to us. Finding something that really touches you in the beginning opens that door wide... Then start to find your own voice by spending time with the instrument – devoting time and effort to practise, and then to finding like-minded people to play with. It's a process, not an event, and through the process, you will find people that will help you grow as an artist and inspire you in new ways."



STEVE JORDAN

"There is so much information out there on the internet, but my advice would be to seek out the original player, or musician, who inspired you. Learn from the originator and take that inspiration into your own playing.

"Also, these days a lot of young musicians just want to be famous, but I would stress the importance of working hard to be the very best that you can be on your instrument. If you become famous in the process, that's great, but don't set out on this journey simply to find fame. All of the things that are important, and will give you longevity as a musician, take time and effort to master. Put the work in, be the best that you can be and, in the process, you'll find your voice."

BECOME A BETTER DRUMMER, FASTER

When you're serious about drumming, you need a kit to match your ambition. The V-Drums TD-17 series lets your technique shine through, backed up with training tools to push you further. Combining a TD-50-class sound engine with newly developed pads results in an affordable electronic drum kit that's authentically close to playing acoustic drums – accurately mirroring the physical movement, stick coordination and hand/foot control that every drummer needs. Meanwhile, an array of built-in coaching functions will track your technique, measure your progress and increase your motivation. Becoming a better drummer is still hard work, but the TD-17 can help you get there.

TD-17 Series V-Drums

‘Figure It Out’
Royal Blood

A syncopated, hard-hitting track featuring a switch to double-time

PLAY-ALONG TRACK

DRUMMER: Ben Thatcher

‘Figure It Out’ is a track that’s full of anticipated hits, or pushes as they’re often known, which for the most part land on the fourth 16th note of the beat. Though when the piece switches to double-time this becomes the ‘&’ of beat 4. With this syncopated quality in mind, it can be worth feeling the piece with an underlying 16th note subdivision, though the groove may involve the right hand playing eighth-notes on the hi-hats or on the ride.

One of the most demanding elements of the piece is the over-the-barline figure that appears at the end of each chorus. This phrase can be quite deceptive as the crashes which appear throughout the chorus and land on the ‘&’ of beat 3 and the second 16th note of beat 4 are continued on into the next bar, easily confusing the unwary listener as to the whereabouts of beat 1. Fortunately, this is nothing more sinister than the figure being playing through the barline and into another bar of 4/4.

Finally, one of the most appealing features of this track for drummers is the double-time outro section where drummer Ben Thatcher gets to stretch out and fill around the syncopated hits. Most of the fills here are based around single-strokes however the one that stands out is the one based around hand/foot triplets which is played moving a right, left foot combination around the kit.

The Track

Royal Blood
‘Figure It Out’

Released: 30th August 2014
UK Chart Position: 43

Heads Up

‘Over-the-barline’ is a term referring to when a phrase is played past its anticipated resolve point and is instead played through a barline to create a longer and more syncopated sound.

“ONE OF THE MOST **APPEALING FEATURES OF THIS TRACK FOR DRUMMERS** IS **THE DOUBLE-TIME OUTRO SECTION** WHERE **DRUMMER BEN THATCHER GETS** TO STRETCH OUT **AND FILL** AROUND THE **SYNCOPATED HITS.**”

Watch Pete’s Play-Along now at
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

1 The verse features a tight kick/snare/hat groove though with occasional 16th note anticipated crashes.

Ben Thatcher plays the drums while the other half of Royal Blood, Mike Kerr, uses a bass with effects pedals to make their mighty alt-rock sound.

Image: Shirlaine Forrest/Getty Images

2 The chorus heads over to the ride cymbal and features crashes on the '&' of beat 3 and the 'e' of 4.

3 The ending moves to a double-time feel and features fills played around the kit while punctuating crashes on the '&' of 4 and beat 2.

‘Radar Love’ Golden Earring

There’s a wealth of drumming ideas on this classic rock epic.

DRUMMER: Cesar Zuiderwijk

In 1973 Dutch rockers Golden Earring penned what is widely regarded as the ultimate driving song. At over six minutes long ‘Radar Love’ carries the listener through several distinctive moods during its uptempo journey with no crunch of gears but it actually begins with several hits that are played at a much slower tempo (117bpm).

With these out of the way, drummer Cesar Zuiderwijk introduces the classic swung ‘train beat’ on the snare at a new faster tempo of 199bpm. This pattern runs through both the first and second verses, though each with slightly different bass drum patterns. The bridge then moves to a more conventional kick/snare/hats feel before heading over to the ride cymbal for the chorus.

However, the part of the track of most interest to drummers is probably the drum break which appears after the guitar solos. During this break, Cesar essentially plays the right-hand tom and bass drum patterns simultaneously while maintaining the backbeat with the left hand. In doing so, he creates one of the most identifiable drum breaks in rock history.

The swing feel runs throughout the song and Cesar displays a clear familiarity with elements of swing playing but with the twist of a rock drummer. He was clearly influenced by the crossing over of genres at the time. For example, he frequently uses the jazz ride cymbal pattern but often in reverse, such as when the drums are reintroduced after the tom break. And also during the guitar solo, he plays a pseudo mambo pattern, first with the tom part on beat 2 and then switching it to the more traditional beat 4 after a few bars. Both are examples of knowing the rules and then breaking them. It all adds up to create one of the most iconic drum tracks in the world of classic rock.

Image: Gijsbert Hanekroot/Getty Images

“THE SWING FEEL RUNS THROUGHOUT THE SONG AND CESAR DISPLAYS A CLEAR FAMILIARITY WITH ELEMENTS OF SWING PLAYING BUT WITH THE TWIST OF A ROCK DRUMMER.”

Watch Pete’s Play-Along now at
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

1 The verse features a swung ‘train beat’ played on the snare.

2 The chorus heads over to the ride cymbal.

3 The drum break features the toms essentially playing the same rhythm as the bass drum while the snare maintains the backbeat on 2 and 4.

Hail Cesar

Cesar Zuiderwijk drives the truckers' national anthem

How did you approach 'Radar Love'?
"The whole rhythm is like an old blues song, an up-tempo shuffle, but after playing the song two or three times you think, 'Well, I've heard that about a thousand times so let's do something else.' I started playing it on the snare drum instead of the hi-hat and all of a sudden everything came together. Then when it comes around again, I always want to do something different, so I started playing a jazzy thing on the cymbals. Nowadays a producer would say, 'Stop it, I want you to do the same thing as before!' It was just a different time, you were pretty free to do whatever you wanted. If you count the end, it's nine bars instead of eight, which would be normal. Onstage, it could be 12 bars, 16 or 17, you never know, because we don't play with a click track, so you're free to do whatever you want."

What drums did you play?
"I had a Ludwig kit with two 26" West End bass drums. The toms and snare were Ludwig which I covered in copper plate. Whenever you started sweating and the drums got wet, the next day the drums would be green. We didn't spend too much time putting the sound together. You put up a microphone, you tune the drums, and that's the sound. The whole song comes together, it's the lyrics, the guitar sound, the drums, the bass, the horns, it's all exciting and you forget about the sound."

Did you always know 'Radar Love' would be a hit?
"No. You never know. I thought another song, 'Vanilla Queen', would be a single. It's like 'Yesterday' for The Beatles or 'Satisfaction' for The Stones, we will always be remembered for 'Radar Love'. It was a huge hit all over the world and in America, it's like the truckers' national anthem."

You take a drum solo in the song live?
"Always. I like to improvise and take chances. Whenever I make a mistake or I don't play what I want to play, people won't notice. It's inside my head, so whatever comes out is okay with them. We used to tour a lot with Rush in the States and Canada. Neil Peart, he plays the same thing every night, every beat, every solo. We asked him, why? He says, well, I wrote the song, I made the best fill at the right spot, so why should I change it? Which is quite interesting but I couldn't do that."

What has been your proudest moment?
"One of the concerts that always stayed with me was with The Who at Madison Square Garden, New York. When you get onstage as a support act, the crowd starts with 'F*** off! Get out of here!', but after we played for 45 minutes, you're watching 25,000 lighters go on. I thought, 'Well, if everything stops here, I'm happy.' I still think about that, but there are so many things still to come."

Image: Paul Bergen/Getty Images

Rhythm

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NEXT MONTH

Rhythm's tribute to
GINGER BAKER

We celebrate the life and work of a drumming legend...

PLUS

LATEST GEAR REVIEWED:
BRITISH DRUM CO. KIT
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BILLY EILISH'S ANDREW MARSHALL INTERVIEWED

BEATS WORKING
LESSONS AND PLAY-ALONGS FROM OUR EXPERT TEAM

+ MUCH MORE!

Image: David Redfern/Getty Images

ON SALE JANUARY

Six of the Best

RALPH SALMINS

From Van and Aretha to over 150 movies, here's the session legend's pick of his amazingly versatile discography...

The Waterboys

Track: 'Where The Action Is'
Album: *Where The Action Is*

"I've been in this band for nine years and this is a track from our latest record. We played everything live and the whole thing felt so good from the get-go. We did two or three takes but the first take had the right energy. This is a full-on rock and roll tune. We open the set with this song."

Benjamin Wallfisch

Track: 'Sugar Plum Raid'
Album: *King of Thieves*

"This is a movie soundtrack for Benjamin Wallfisch, a British composer who I had never worked with before. It was recorded live [at Abbey Road] with the rhythm section and then the brass section was overdubbed. It was quite tricky because it had been demoed well. There were quite a few tempo changes that were a little demanding. It can be challenging to sight-read things like that. It was challenging but very rewarding because I think it sounds fantastic."

Aretha Franklin (with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra)

Track: 'A Natural Woman'
Album: *A Brand New Me*

"I've done a few albums in this Symphonic Series, such as with Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. They involve making updated versions of the original records. It is challenging to recreate a classic track and put a new slant on it without losing the original's feel. I used a lot of vintage gear on these records, like my vintage Gretsch kit."

Electric Lady Big Band

Track: 'Gypsy Eyes'
Album: *Electric Lady Big Band*

"Of course I've always been a massive Hendrix fan and Mitch Mitchell has been one of my biggest influences. I had free rein to do whatever I liked on this record because we weren't recreating the album, we were putting it into a different context. We had an all-star band on this record and it was super fun to make."

Van Morrison

Track: 'The Healing Game'
Album: *The Healing Game*

"Van had a really big band at this point. We had two drummers, the other being Geoff Dunn, two bass players, it was almost two bands in one. Most of what we did with Van was all put down live, including horns and vocals. This is a beautiful song. It takes me back to happy and musically challenging days."

The Alec & John Dankworth Generation Big Band

Track: 'I Got Rheumatics'
Album: *Rhythm Changes*

"This was great because John Dankworth is such a jazz legend and Alec is a friend and one of my favourite bass players. This was recorded live at Ronnie Scott's. It's a classic John Dankworth take on 'I Got Rhythm', so it becomes 'I Got Rheumatics'. It's a sprightly big band having fun at Ronnie Scott's which is something I've been lucky to do lots of over the years."

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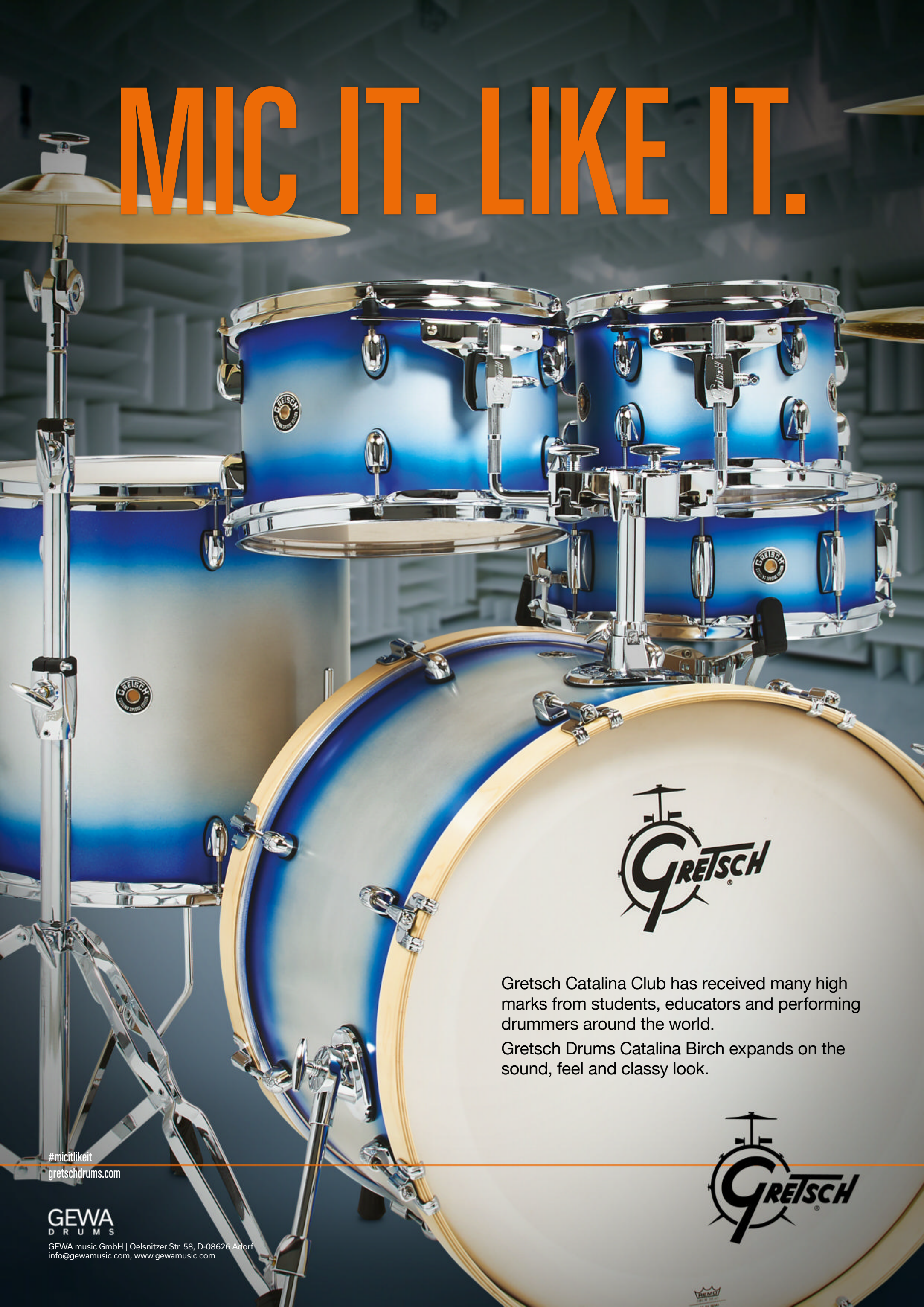

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